PC ZONE

GAMES

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#107 OCT 2001

REVEALED
BLACK & WHITE:
CREATURE ISLES
QUAKE IV

EXCLUSIVE REVIEW & DEMO

PROJECT EDEN

Is there life after Lara?

EXCLUSIVE

DUNGEON SIEGE

We get our hands on the next big RPG from the creator of Total Annihilation

SOUNDCARD ROUND-UP
The best noise money can buy

DEFINITIVE REVIEWS

MAX PAYNE

Is it the best action game ever?

PLUS...
MECHCOMMANDER 2
GRAND PRIX 3
SEASON 2000

○ TINY COMPO:
What are the names of
the four characters from
Project Eden?

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COMMAND CENTRE

Sergeant O'Hara (or 'Butcher' as the lads call him) is leading us into Lille to support a group of trapped allied soldiers. The plan is to send in a soldier to secure one of the buildings and allow the sniper to get into position. Then the infiltration begins...

Saw Sergeant Blackwood in action today. I can see now why they call him 'Fins'. He managed to take out a guard, steal a boat and raft the entire troop upstream through heavy current.

Jaw - dropping graphics and a variety of locations across Europe, Asia and The Pacific.
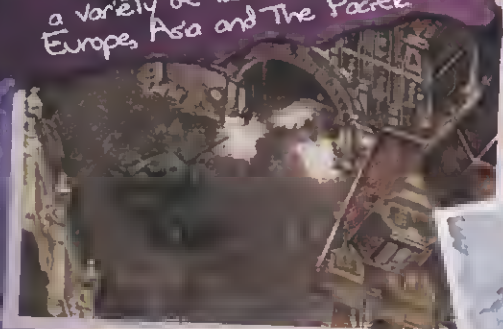
Use the environment like never before.

Move inside buildings and vehicles. View the action from any angle.

MORE REAL THAN REAL LIFE

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THRONE OF DARKNESS

MODS INCLUDING: PAINKEEP ARENA, THE OPERA AND TACTICAL OPS

PLUS! FULL VERSION OF JUMPGATE · GANGSTERS 2 · CONQUEST: FRONTIER WARS · MYSTERY OF THE DRUIDS · WARBIRDS III · FULL ICEWIND DALE ADD-ON · AND MORE...

WIN THE TOP 10 PC GAMES SEE THE PC ZONE CHARTS **PAGE 20**

🡢 Put your seats in the upright position for *Fly! II*.

IT DOESN'T RAIN BUT IT POURS

We're nothing without the games that developers make, and we have to try and build our magazine around the various delays that beset about 99.8 per cent of projects in development. The result is that some months are so quiet you can hear the corpses shuffling around in the morgue directly opposite our office. And then you get months like this, when all our buses turn up at once, and we can proclaim the fact that we've got five (no really, five!) exclusive demos on the cover, including a World Exclusive *Aliens Vs Predator 2* mission, which isn't being released onto the Internet until the day we go on sale. And believe me, it took the combined strength of Martin Korda's two huge arms to persuade Vivendi that it would be in their best interests to keep the world waiting until our issue of *ZONE* hits the shelves.

We've also got the first review and exclusive demo of *Project Eden*, the game Core Design (you know, the people responsible for Lara) has spent the last four years slaving over. It's definitely different and surprisingly satisfying as well, which you'll find out for yourself if you cleverly ignore my pre-mag ramblings and turn to page 50.

> **"Some months are so quiet you can hear the corpses shuffling around in the morgue directly opposite our office"**

And (sounds of distant fanfare) we've finally got round to reviewing a copy of *Max Payne*. Because of the weird media blackout usually only reserved for dogs (which *Max Payne* isn't), we had the choice of venturing down to Take 2 for an afternoon, reviewing it over the course of three hours and using approved screenshots, or waiting until the game was on sale and doing our own thang. We opted for the latter, with the net result that our review is coming out around the time when you've either bought the game already or have no intention of doing so. On the off-chance that you're waiting for our say-so, turn to page 54 now and then get yourself down the shops. Yes, it is that damn good, albeit a trifle short.

But that's not all. Before I head off down the King & Queen (our local) I should also point you in the direction of our new regular emulation column (p25), our splendiferous soundcard round-up (p100) and our exclusive hands-on with the soon-to-be-released role-player, *Dungeon Siege* (p32). See you next month.

Dave Woods
Editor

⊘ Two for the price of one.

Move over Counter-Strike...

GLOBAL OPERATIONS

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Barking Dog Studios
PUBLISHER EA/Crave Entertainment
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Winter 2002
WEBSITE www.globalopsgame.com

IN SUMMARY

Global Ops is a multiplayer-focused team-oriented FPS. With a series of terrorist versus anti-terrorist scenarios, it sits somewhere between *Counter-Strike* and *Rainbow Six*. Multiplayer support for up to 24 players is promised, as well as a solo mode with bots.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

The game uses real-world hot spots such as Beirut, Chechnya and Sri Lanka, and features actual terrorist and anti-terrorist organisations. Throw in more than 30 real-life weapons, accurately modelled entry and exit wounds, and it's about as close as you're going to get to being a crazed gunman on a killing spree.

Terrorism has never been such fun

✪ **GLOBETROTTING** STEVE HILL

Come on lads, show a bit of respect.

There will be around 200 unique player modals in the game.

Welcome to Beirut, city of culture.

There will be around 200 unique player modals available.

What kind of world are we living in when vicarious terrorism is a valid form of home entertainment? An increasingly sophisticated and varied one, if *Global Operations* is anything to go by, as the game seeks to capitalise on the success of *Counter-Strike* with an authentic replication of the spills and thrills of international terrorism. The vagaries of generic troops in combat trousers is not enough for the developers of

be anywhere near Barking Dog Studios should they take offence. Imagine the scene as a massive explosion rips through the complex, leaving only the charred remains of a thousand action figures and a soda machine to suggest that the game developer ever existed.

But hey, let's hope it doesn't come to that, as *Global Ops* is shaping up to be quite a worthy addition to the terrorism genre. Along with the cream of world terrorism, the game also features a number of actual anti-terrorist organisations, and the game will be played out in some of the

> **"An advanced ballistics model is being employed, based on the power of the weapon used and the malleability of the flesh ruptured by the hot leaden death parcel"**

Global Ops though, as they have taken the bold step of replicating actual terrorist organisations. Clearly this has been done without the express permission of the organisations involved, and we wouldn't like to

world's traditional hotbeds of radical activist activity. A steamy night in Beirut? You got it. The stench of death in Chechnya? You bet. Even if you don't know where these places are, the names will be familiar to followers of

world affairs, and it's a shame that Kate Adie couldn't be convinced to appear between missions with an earnest report.

As for the intricacies of the gameplay, well what do you know? Shoot people in the head, face, neck, chest or limb and they react accordingly. An extremely advanced ballistics model is being employed, based on the power of the weapon used and the malleability of the yielding flesh ruptured by the hot leaden death parcel. So, for instance, you could shoot someone in the leg, the bullet could pass through it and then embed itself in their other leg. Which would do very little for their golf swing.

More pedantic still, if you miss your target completely and hit a wall, the engine will apparently take into account material density, wall thickness and bullet calibre to determine the penetration or ricochet trajectory.

Unlike *Counter-Strike*, killed players can be re-inserted into the game, taking on the role of reinforcements, thus negating the problem of sitting around drumming your fingers while Korda camps the loft. Various character classes will be available, each with different skills, including recon, sniping, medic and demolitions expert. The release date might be some way off, but *Global Ops* is our top tip for a terrorism treat. PCZ

Kneel before...

IN SUMMARY

Three blokes in a ship have only gone and discovered another land, one packed with a group of creatures that live together in a sect called the Brotherhood and without the influence of any god. They know new skills and are willing to let you in on the secrets if you and your creature can perform a series of tasks.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Like it or loathe it, *Black & White* was one of the most original titles released in years. This add-on pack, which Lionhead is referring to as a mini-sequel, takes the open-ended AI model and improves upon it, while adding a more tightly focused gaming experience.

BLACK & WHITE: CREATURE ISLES

The best just got a bit bigger

⭐ **PENITENT ONE** DAVE WOODS

Learn new miracles from the Brotherhood.

The dreaded boss from *Chuckle Egg* makes an unwelcome appearance.

The view from the Café Del Mar.

Teach your creature, who teaches his creature, who...

When *Black & White* was released earlier in the year, a massive wedge was driven into the heart of the gaming community. We haven't had as much feedback about a game since the dreaded *QIII/UT* debate, and although a load of you loved it, just as many seemed to hate the micro-management and the unfortunate fact that the game was buggy on release. Not one to be deterred, Molyneux and Lionhead have been hard at work creating what is undoubtedly just the first of a whole host of *Black & White* expansions. *Creature Isles* is being tagged a mini-sequel, but if you're really nice we'll let you substitute the words add-on pack, or expansion.

Anyhow, do you remember those annoying, singing missionaries from the first land? "Ohhhhhhhh... get us some wood and get us some meat 'cause we're too bloody lazy to get to

our feeeeeeeet." You should have squashed them with a rock, but if you had they wouldn't have discovered a new land, populated by a group of creatures who live in a commune known as the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood prove that living together in harmony can bring great rewards and the island holds loads of new miracles for your creature to learn.

The trouble is that before the Brotherhood will disgorge any of its secrets you have to take part in an initiation rite, which demands you

> **"Jumping through hoops is only half of the game. As well as performing for the crowd, your creature has to raise a pet of its own"**

suck up to the natives by performing a task for each in turn. After you've succeeded in all of these you're marked with the sign of the Brotherhood and your creature will become more powerful than you could possibly imagine. Or something like that.

But jumping through hoops for the Brotherhood is only half of the game. As well as performing for the crowd, your creature has to raise a pet of its own. And where as in *Black & White* your actions formed the basis for the actions of your creatures, so the way your creature acts will determine the nature of its new little friend.

After hearing about the impending release, we got straight on the phone to Peter Molyneux to quiz him about the new game and whether you can expect to see any advancements beyond the new skills. He was keen to point out that the AI (one of the high points for the original game)

has been taken even further this time around; and the fact that your actions dictate your creature's, which in turn moulds his apprentice, takes the open-ended gameplay into completely new territories. *Creature Isles* also contains more specific games and puzzles than the original, which has been criticised by some for being nothing more than a glorified sandpit powered by a superb 3D engine. We haven't seen code running yet, but you can rest assured that we'll be motoring down the road to Lionhead Studios as soon as a preview build is up and running. PCZ

BULLETIN

NEWS EDITOR Anthony Holden

Newer than ever
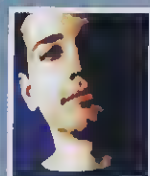
Welcome to the new-look Bulletin. Well, sort of. You've probably picked up on a few of the little changes we've been making over the last few issues, and you'll be seeing more in the next few as well. It's all part of the grand plan to overhaul the section and give you a greater variety of stuff from the world of games. Part of that plan is the introduction of regular features, and this month sees the debut of Emulation Zone, where we fill you lo on the latest developments in the emu scene. As far as we're concerned, being able to play just about every game ever released on any platform is one of the greatest strengths of the PC. Along with connectivity, processing power and the mod scene, it's part of what makes the PC the best gaming machine around, so we thougbt it was about time to make it a regular part of the best gaming mag around (that's us).

Of course, whatever else changes, we'll always retain our commitment to keeping you abreast of the most exciting upcoming games and industry developments. Luckily we usually know what's going to happen before even it does, and you need look no further than Quake IV for an example. We were the first to speculate on its existence on our website a couple of months back, and we all but confirmed it in last month's issue. By the time you're reading this, QuakeCon will have happened, and all will have been revealed by Carmack and co anyway, but that's just the way of things. Having always been a Quake guy, I'm pretty keen to see how Raven can possibly improve on what's gone before. And if you're wondering about that logo, of course it's not the real thing, just a little something we mocked up to wbet your appetites...

Quake goes fourth...

id passes the multiplayer mantle to Raven Software

Do you remember the protracted bout ot in-fighting at id Software last year? The tiff was about the future direction of the company, and more specifically the name of the next game id was to code. John Carmack was adamant that *Doom III* (a single-player experience) was the only game he was willing to put his name next to, and even threatened to leave the company unless Adrian Carmack and Kevin Cloud (who jointly control 50 per cent of the company's stock) agreed. Which they did. And, even though the game has only just been officially announced, the *Doom III* engine was shown off at a Mac convention where various highbrow graphics bods were probably singularly unimpressed, preferring to talk about the latest Photoshop plug-in. So, is the *Quake* franchise dead?

This was seemingly contirmed publicly by id with the following statement: "*Quake III* Is probably id's last 'I am a one-man army with no control or power over the environment around me' game. I think with *Quake III* we've nailed down the pure, classic deathmatch style. In the future we can develop new game types or new variants ot that, which will be pretty exciting."

However, recent reports have confirmed that although *Quake III Arena* might have been id's last, the franchise is still alive and rocket-jumping. We can reveal that *Quake IV* is going to happen and that it's already been in development for over six months, over at id's long-standing bedfellows, Raven Software. As expected it's going to utilise the *Doom 3* engine, which Raven has access to while id is working on its completion, and it's expected that it will also feature Raven's GHOUL rendering technology, which provides multiple hit-zones and was responsible for turning *Soldier Of Fortune* into a virtual bloodtest.

Another strong rumour is that the game isn't going to be strictly multiplayer, as with *Arena*, but that it will include a single-player campaign as well. It wouldn't make much sense for Raven to take the engine without adding anything apart from weapons and models, and if it can combine pure deathmatching with the sort of story that hasn't been in evidence in any ot the three previous incarnations, *Quake IV* could provide the perfect symmetry gamers have been clamouring tor.

By the time you're reading this, an official announcement will have been made at QuakeCon, which took place on August 10 at Mesquite, Texas, just after we went to press. The very latest news on the game, along with the tirst solid report on *Doom 3* is expected to be made public, and you'll be able to get the lowdown on our website, along with an in-depth first look in the next issue of *PC ZQNE*.

Raven Software • ETA TBC • www.ravensoft.com

The new *Doom 3* engine.
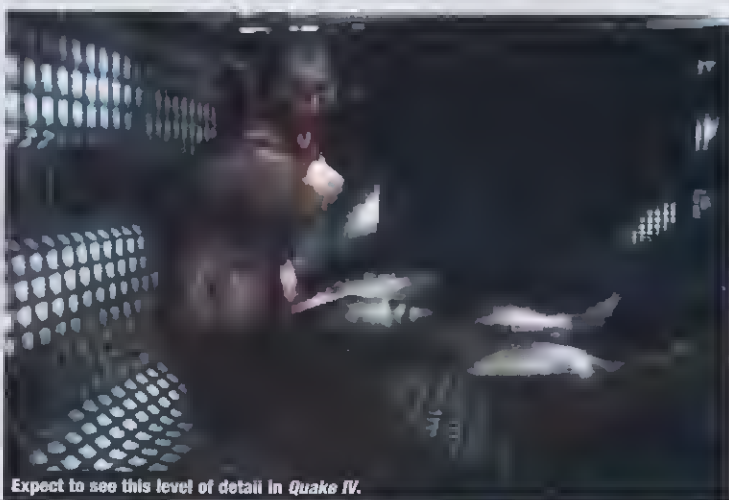
Expect to see this level of detail in *Quake IV*.
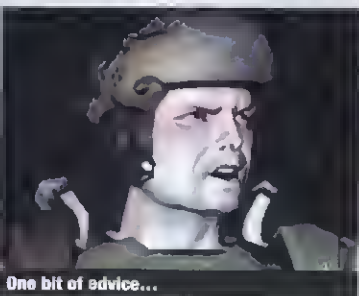
One bit of advice...

...save up your pennies...
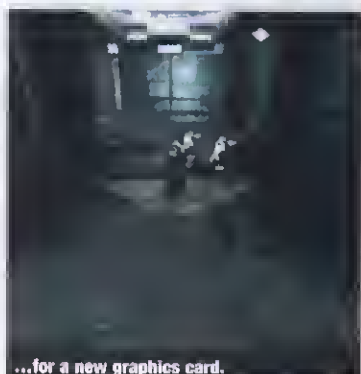
...for a new graphics card.
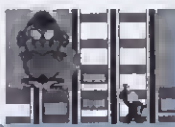
Garret looks as shady as ever.

This isn't Garret. He's not nearly sneaky enough.

Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen's boudoir.

Part of a rendering test, this cathedral probably won't make it into the final game.

Return to a life of crime

The first glimpse of *Thief 3* gives us our first insight into Warren Spector's dark secret

People of a sneaky and secretive nature everywhere have been in a lather ever since it was revealed that *Thief 3* is in development at what is still officially being called Ion Storm Austin (pending an imminent name change following the closure of Ion Storm Dallas). Then again, with an amalgamated dream team of original *Thief*-ers and fragments of Looking Glass Studios working on the title, and *Deus Ex* mastermind Warren Spector presiding over the whole thing, you can hardly blame them.

The first batch of artwork has been released for the game, and while only giving a tiny glimpse of what is to come, confirms that the murky ambience of the series is to be retained. One of the most notable changes since *Thief 2* has been the decision to ditch the now outdated renderings of the Dark Engine in favour of the *Unreal Warfare* engine.

Speculations have abounded as to whether the *Unreal* engine would produce the same shadowy quality that made the other games so atmospheric – not to mention enabling Garret to skulk about unseen in the first place. "*Unreal* isn't perfect for us straight out of the box, but we're making the changes it takes to make *Thief 3* a great game," assures project director Randy Smith. "*Unreal* also has power to render some stuff that the Dark Engine could never have hoped to render. The environments in *Thief 3* are going to feel like you can reach out and touch them."

Much of the initial work has been directed towards enhancing the individual player experience and in particular honing the enemy AI. The way enemies react when you make a sound has always been one of the most integral features of the *Thief* games, and the modelling of both hearing and sight is expected to make great advances in this instalment. "*Thief 3* already features guards who patrol, see and hear, search for you when they detect you, and say 'must have been rats' afterwards," offers Randy. "We have so much of a head start, we'll be able to tune it to within an inch of its life before it ships, which is great." Levels will be noticeably bigger as well, with a variety of dark yet lushly rendered environments, and for the first time you'll be able to control Garrett in third-person mode.

The stealth genre has produced some of the finest 'feel like you're really there' games around, and in this respect the *Thief* games reign supreme. Luckily, we can sleep easy in the knowledge that *Thief 3* is in the safest hands possible.

Ion Storm Austin • ETA TBA

Now with added Castle
Destruction Technology®.

Middle age crisis approaches

New details emerge of Creative Assembly's *Shogun* sequel, *Crusader: Total War*

We all knew Creative Assembly was hard at work on the second game in its *Total War* series. We knew because they told us months before the first in the series, *Shogun*, was even released. The question was, which period of human history would be top of the most wanted list?

Well now the truth is out, and happily we can report that rather than take the all-too-obvious route with *Caesar: Total War*, the developers have instead decided to centre their next epic on the Middle Ages, a time when Robin Hood robbed from the rich and sported a mullet, while the rest of England's so-called heroes were off raping and looting the Middle East in the name of Christianity.

Like its predecessor, *Crusader: Total War* will again offer epic real-time strategy set across 3D terrain, with up to 8,000 units battling across each map. As you can see, the units will again be bitmapped rather than processor-hungry polygons, which means that aside from allowing bigger

battles, the game should appeal to owners of low-spec machines (the original ran fine on a P233).

This time set across 400 years of European history, from the time of the first Crusade to the *Reconquista* in Spain, *Crusader* will offer great variety, certainly in terms of the look of the game, with the game map stretching from the deserts of the Holy Land to the cold Interior of Eastern

> ## **❝ *Crusader* will focus a lot more on diplomacy, espionage and political manoeuvring ❞**

Europe. There are currently plans to depict 11 of Europe's most notorious armies, including the English, the Holy Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire – each of course with their own distinct set of buildings and upgrades.

The real-time tactical battles and turn-based *Risk*-style strategy will be retained, though *Crusader*

will focus a lot more on diplomacy, espionage and political manoeuvring. The nature of battle will also be expanded to allow players to lay siege to and destroy castles, a feature sorely missing from *Shogun*. So as well as armies of knights, pikemen and archers, you'll be able to command all manner of war machines and siege engines.

Set across a far broader period of history, players will have to adapt their strategies to take into account changing technologies such as the introduction of gunpowder, as well as historical shifts in the influence of various conflicting religions.

There are few details regarding the multiplayer aspects of *Crusader*, but we can at least expect a similar set of options to both *Shogun* and its recent *Mongol Invasion* expansion. Plus, of course, faster network code and perhaps – fingers crossed – a full multiplayer campaign game option.

Creative Assembly • ETA 2002 • www.totalwar.com

Units will be more identifiable than they were before.

Robin and his merry men are probably in there somewhere.

Aw, look, horses.
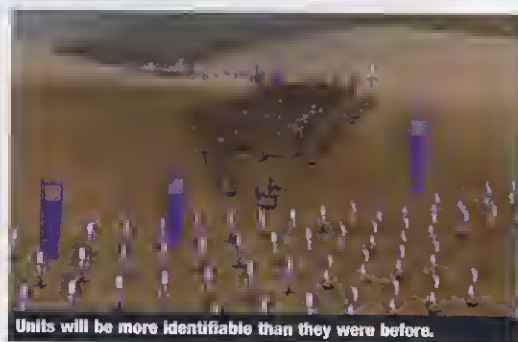
Track-side story

TOCA Race Driver is set to rewrite the racing rulebook

Who needs narrative, eh?

One of the biggest brands in the world of driving games is set to return to the PC with the announcement of Codemasters' new motorsports sim, *TOCA Race Driver*. We've managed to get our hands on the first batch of in-game screenshots, and as you can see it's looking mighty fine, though unfortunately these pics only show the game as it will appear in the PS2 version. Try to imagine something that looks just like this, except with more detail and higher resolution and you pretty much get the picture.

The *TOCA* games have always prided themselves on authenticity and attention to detail, and this is something that's set to continue with *Race Driver*, with the usual range of real cars, real tracks, real teams and so on. However, Codemasters is going one step further this time, promising the most advanced damage modeling ever achieved in a racing game. The Finite Element Modelling system actually simulates the deformation of both the panels and inner workings of the cars over the duration of an impact, so that every crash results in different, and supposedly accurate, twists, dings and breaks.

While that sounds just lovely, the really big deal is a mooted shift in game structure. In a move of some audacity, Codemasters plan to do away racing game conventions such as front ends, options screens and all the usual trappings of the genre and present it more like an adventure title. Instead of simply unlocking new cars and tracks, *Race Driver* will introduce a fully fledged plot-based structure, with a strong cast of characters and episodic storyline. Taking the role of lowly test driver Ryan McKane, you must drive your way through various racing divisions and ultimately become world champion. Expect plenty of interaction with your greasy-haired manager Paulie and his busty assistant Melanie, as well as various other race competitors, family members and motorsport fans.

We're hoping a branching storyline will allow you to skip vital events because you're too busy sipping cocktails with exotic models on the Cote d'Azur, or at least sink into a wretched abyss of drug abuse and cheap hookers it all does not go well on the track. But we're not holding our breath.

Codemasters • ETA 2002 • www.codemasters.com
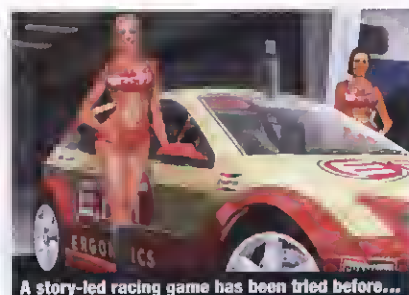
A story-led racing game has been tried before...

Race Driver
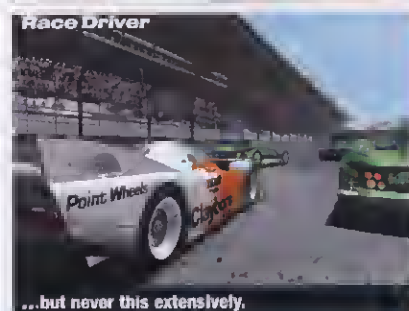
...but never this extensively.

Race Driver
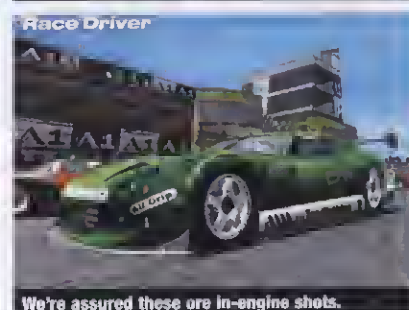
We're assured these are in-engine shots.

INSIDE GAMES

STATE OF THE ART – PART TWO: THE FUTURE

In the second of a two-part look at the state of the industry, *Mike Anderiesz* mulls over the future with *Warren Spector*, *Peter Molyneux*, Demis Hassabis and *Hubert Chardot*

So here we are in 2001, the year Arthur C Clarke predicted we'd be tackling sentient computers in outer space to the sound of the *Blue Danube*. Well, that didn't happen, did it? If the movie were being remade to today's tech specs, HAL would be a PlayStation 2 and the astronauts would still be waiting in the airlock for decent software.

So what can we really look forward to in the next decade or so? Opinions vary greatly, and even those who will supposedly determine the future of gaming, the developers themselves, find it impossible to agree. We approached several key figures working at the cutting edge of game development and hassled them for answers, and found more branching possibilities than the most ambitious interactive narrative. Here, for what it's worth, are my own predictions.

Firstly, graphics will continue to drive game development as they have up to now. From the Spectrum to GameBoy Advance, better graphics have always been the main reason to buy both hardware and entertainment software. Convergence between Hollywood and Silicon Valley suggests that

within the decade almost any movie special effect will be able to be portrayed in real time in a game. Think *Black & White* with *Shrek*-quality visuals and you're not far off.

Secondly, AI will continue to be the Holy Grail of games design, the aim being to have NPCs behaving exactly like real players. Looking at *Quake III*'s moronic jumping bots, we obviously have a long way to go before Tom Hanks's fear of real-time synthespians replacing actors becomes a reality. Nevertheless, it will happen

"Gaming portals will become as important to developers as multiplexes are to movie studios"

and when it does, everything we know about games and indeed popular culture will change.

Finally, multiplayer games will continue to co-exist with single-player until consoles develop a significant online capability, at which point boxed single-player games will become decreasingly viable. Gaming portals will emerge as online arcades, where you pay credits to pick from a range of lavish interactive attractions supplied by the biggest software companies. Such portals will become as important to developers as multiplexes are to movie studios.

DIFFERENT STROKES

I could argue these predictions at some length, but what would be the point? The leaders of the industry already disagree with me in just about every way.

"If graphics are the main area of progress in gaming over the next five years, we're in for a world of trouble," says Warren (*Deus Ex*) Spector. "Sure, games will get better-looking but the biggest advances will come from richer, more densely interactive worlds. And I am so tired of hearing

about multiplayer games as the one and only future of gaming."

Hubert (*Alone In The Dark*) Chardot disagrees for different reasons. In the process of simultaneously developing a game based on a movie (Cryo's *From Dusk Till Dawn*) and a movie based on a game (*The Devil Inside*), he naturally sees better scripts and characters as more important than either graphics or interaction.

"A scenario is a database," says Chardot. "It exists to give you the information you need to care about your actions. It's a tool to immerse gamers into an interactive universe and create emotions. I think a solid script is very important for action/

Is this really our enemy?

The latest victim of a cut-throat industry.

adventures, even if the game were 98 per cent pure action-based."

Peter (*Black & White*) Molyneux, meanwhile, finds something else entirely to focus on.

"There is one piece of hardware that isn't evolving much, and that's the way we play the game with mouse and joypad. We're doing all these amazing things with 3D worlds but people are targeting it in exactly the same way. If you asked me what I want, it's not a faster processor – it's a better way of interacting with it."

So, if the simple predictions cause such disagreement, then asking 'what

Expect videogames to look like this in the very near future.

Or hopefully more like this...

Most seem to agree: online gaming will only get bigger.

kind of games will we be playing in ten years?' or 'what kind of people will be playing them?' is unlikely to generate anything but white noise.

WHO'S THE BOSS?

The truth is that even if Molyneux, Carmack, Miyamoto and the rest of software's greatest heroes got together and hammered out their blueprint for the future, there is no guarantee it would occur because game designers have never been masters of their own destiny. Above them all sit the gods of hardware: Intel, Nintendo, Sony and now Microsoft – prevented from joining forces by anti-trust laws and greed, destined to divide and hold back their followers for decades to come. While Spielberg concentrates on making the best movies he can, even the best game designers must struggle against the medium itself, making new tools and engines for every new game, mastering new hardware every three to five years, resigned to the fact that if their names are still remembered in 2010 it will be an exception to the rule (see boxout).

"It would be fantastic not to have a hardware issue," says Molyneux, "but that's not going to be a reality for a long time. You end up starting a game being ridiculously optimistic and you do feel like you're reinventing the wheel – in fact you have to. It's a unique thing that we've got, this computer entertainment."

Spector agrees, while drawing the line at how far this will affect reputations. "Certainly, we're constantly challenged by platform issues – heck, the PC changes radically enough that you can be left behind during the development of a single game. But look at the folks who made the first movies – the Lumieres, William Kennedy, Laurie Dickson, J Stuart Blackton, Edwin S Porter... household names, right? Gaming is too young a medium to be drawing conclusions about career-length."

GROWING PAINS

But there are deeper problems still. Mention the subject of 'games for girls' and howls of derision ring out from gamers and publishers alike. And yet can you think of any other medium that treats women and the over 30s

with such flagrant disregard? This is not an inevitable consequence of developing videogames, it is commercial suicide and if publishers don't recognise the importance of appealing to a wider audience, won't they be picked off one by one by bigger companies that do?

"Here's the problem," retorts Spector, "as we move more and more into the mainstream, we have to make concessions to mainstream taste, mainstream skill levels, mainstream time constraints. Growing the audience doesn't necessarily mean dumbing games down, but it does mean we have to find ways to make interfaces more streamlined, difficulty levels more tunable, rewards more frequent, playing times shorter..."

Molyneux agrees, pointing out that the industry may yet mature of its own accord as it enters its early 30s. "I think you can start to see the signs of the industry realising it's producing entertainment and not just games, and that will have a huge influence. Games that are much more advanced and accessible, as visually realistic as any film but also physically realistic about the rules in those worlds. We're really only at the start of all that."

Whether or not there is agreement about where we are headed, there are clearly some strong ideas about where we should be, and the future seems to be in reasonably safe hands. But all the same, don't you sometimes yearn for a clearer sense of purpose? A leader prepared to fight our corner and take games to a new level, brushing Intel and Microsoft aside if need be. The question is, who in their right mind would want the job?

"The industry has created 25 years of tremendous accomplishments and changes that happened because of us," says Chardot. "We have changed the way of perceiving the world, art and business. We are continuing to create a kind of revolution."

Lead on Monsieur Chardot, lead on... (Incidentally, those interested in preventing the future from becoming French should contact the editor.) PCZ

○ Mike Anderiesz was the launch manager of *MUD*, the original online RPG, way back in 1987. A veteran games writer, he is currently games correspondent for the *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*.

Forty per cent of *EverQuest* players are women. Publishers should take note.

REINVENTING THE WHEEL

Keeping up with accelerating technology

One of the major beefs raised by developers always seems to be the endless race they run against constantly shifting technology. We were chatting recently with our chum Demis Hassabis, managing director of Elixir Studios and the brains behind *Republic: The Revolution*, and he seemed to have the answer...

PCZ So what's the solution to this lack of innovation we're always banging on about?
DH The main problem with it is, innovation takes a long time, it costs a lot of money and it's very high risk. It's ridiculous, and it's just getting harder and harder. Technical and design innovation go hand in hand as I see it. Better technology frees up the possibilities for you to be more creative. I believe that the way the industry's going is not going to be sustainable, in terms of having three or four-year game development cycles. We're going to have to find ways of being able to innovate quicker and I think the main way we're going to do that is working out how to reuse things better, because we're crap at that.
PCZ Like sharing engines...
DH Sharing engines, middleware, tools, reuse of stuff, all these things have got to become more important, and I think we're seeing this already. Slowly it'll get better and better, and then maybe in 20 years' time we'll be like films, where we don't have to worry about building the camera any more, or the editing suite – we just worry about the content. That would be fantastic.
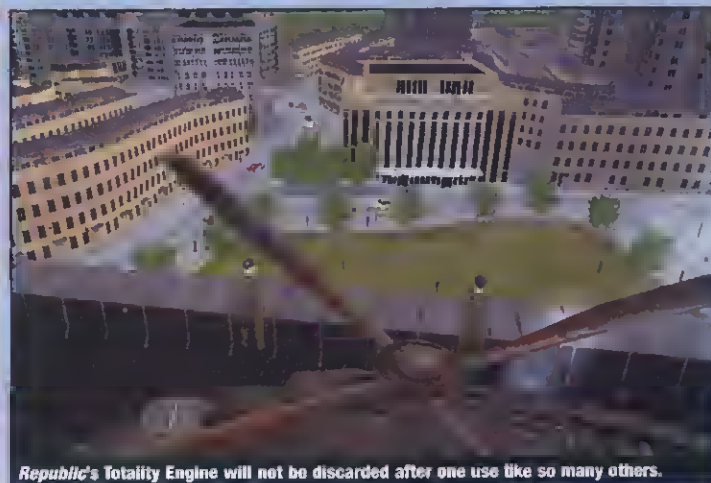
Republic's Totality Engine will not be discarded after one use like so many others.
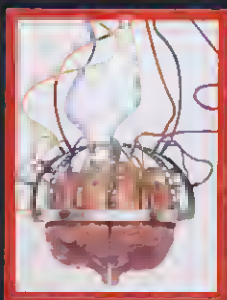
TECHHEAD

Microsoft under the cosh again, while video cards evolve further with the Radeon 2

SYSTEMS SULTAN Carlos Ruiz

RADEON ACTIVE

With cutting-edge Smartshader technology, ATI's new Radeon 2 is even more advanced than GeForce3

ATI is a relative old-timer in the video card arena, and together with Matrox now form the only serious competition in the face of NVIDIA's seemingly unstoppable GeForce series. The first Radeon was met with unanimous approval, not least because it came out some time after the GeForce2 GTS and was slightly more technologically advanced as a result. Therefore, it's no surprise that the Radeon 2 is taking a leaf out of the same book, leapfrogging the GeForce3 with several smart additions to the feature set.

The new Radeon takes full advantage of DirectX 8.1's latest version of Pixel Shader, affording numerous possibilities in graphical effects, all of which will ultimately contribute towards realism in future games. The system is a somewhat more advanced example than NVIDIA's nfiniteFX, which was covered on this page way back in *PCZ* #102.

The effects include 'Matrix Palette Skinning' to allow skeletal characters with virtual bones to move and bend naturally, 'Advanced Keyframe Interpolation' to enable complex facial expressions and speech, and 'Particle Systems' to give fire, sparks and explosions actual physical attributes for outstanding realism.

There's also 'Fur Rendering' to give the impression of fuzzy hair or fur, 'Anisotropic Lighting' to let light reflect in different directions depending on the viewing angle, and 'Multiple Bump-Maps', which enables rippling effects in water as a result of both the wind and an object falling in it, simultaneously.

NVIDIA has piped up to protest that the Radeon 2 is not massively superior to their GeForce3, but that has yet to be confirmed. Either way, the benchmarks are what really count, and we'll be sure to run some tests in the not-too-distant future to see exactly how much the new Radeon whips the competition. Confirmation of prices are also due soon, so if you're in doubt, don't shell out your hard-earned cash just yet.

WPA WRANGLE

Microsoft's anti-piracy controversy

Recent figures suggest that while everyone is desperate to get their hands on the latest Microsoft operating system, not that many folk are willing to shell out £40 to £80 for each upgrade. Astounding numbers of copies on PCs worldwide were installed from pirated CDs, with the highest concentration in Far Eastern countries, where as little as 3 per cent of all business software is legitimate.

Enter Windows Product Activation (WPA for short), which is a controversial type of protection against piracy. Windows XP will require the user to 'activate' the software within a month of installation, which involves the computer automatically generating a unique 'fingerprint' code by looking at the different set-up of hardware in your machine. You then phone Microsoft or visit its website with the code to get your activation number.

This is supposed to prevent the same CD being used on more than one computer, regardless of whether it's been copied to another disc. However, beta testers have raised the issue of potential problems with hardware upgrades, which seems like a rather obvious point to overlook, but Microsoft has since modified the system to allow a certain amount of upgrades over a certain period of time. Other changes involve the smoothing out of any re-activating processes, should they become necessary.

The general consensus is that this system will create a lot of problems for home users (it doesn't feature in the business version) while only preventing petty piracy. The system won't be impossible to crack, and tools will surely be made available on the web to counter the system. After all, even non-pirates will be eager to bypass the complexities if they tend to upgrade often. In keeping with the outrage, there is even a possibility that legal action will be brought against Microsoft in an effort to force them to ditch the idea.

In related news, Windows XP will reportedly have two separate upgrades available on release for download at a price of between £10 and £25 each. The first will be an MP3 encoder (Media Player only encodes in Microsoft's more restrictive WMA format), and the other will be a fully-featured software DVD player, developed with Cyberlink of PowerDVD fame, among other companies.

CHARTS

Everything you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload. Plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what's hot and what's not

Stop! Bullet time...

THE *Virgin* megastores TOP 10

AUG	SEP	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	MAX PAYNE	REMEOY	TAKE 2	90%
3	2	DIABLO II – LORD OF DESTRUCTION	BLIZZARO	VIVENOI	83%
4	3	OPERATION FLASHPOINT	BOHEMIA INTERACTIVE	COOEMASTERS	90%
NE	4	BALDUR'S GATE II: THRONE OF BHAAL	BIOWARE	INTERPLAY	82%
NE	5	MICROSOFT TRAIN SIMULATOR	KUJU ENTERTAINMENT	MICROSOFT	80%
NE	6	HALF-LIFE GENERATIONS/BLUE SHIFT BUNDLE	VALVE/GEARBOX	VIVENOI	NA
1	7	HALF-LIFE: BLUE SHIFT	GEARBOX	VIVENOI	78%
2	8	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS	VALVE	VIVENOI	95%
NE	9	SWAT 3: ELITE EDITION	SIERRA	VIVENOI	89%
RE	10	TROPICO	POPTOP SOFTWARE	TAKE 2	S9%

THE ChartTrack TOP 10 ELSPA

AUG	SEP	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	MAX PAYNE	REMEDY	TAKE 2	90%
1	2	OPERATION FLASHPOINT	BOHEMIA INTERACTIVE	COOEMASTERS	90%
NE	3	MICROSOFT TRAIN SIMULATOR	KUJU ENTERTAINMENT	MICROSOFT	80%
NE	4	BALDUR'S GATE II: THRONE OF BHAAL	BIOWARE	INTERPLAY	82%
4	5	THE SIMS: HOUSE PARTY	MAXIS	EA	50%
10	6	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
6	7	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS	VALVE	VIVENOI	95%
2	8	DIABLO II – LORD OF DESTRUCTION	BLIZZARO	VIVENDI	83%
5	9	BLACK & WHITE	LIONHEAD	EA	95%
8	10	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%

Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA

WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

Once again, *PC ZONE* and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer the following simple question:

QUESTION: In what country are *Max Payne* developers Remedy based?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with *all* the information requested, to the address below.

➕ Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).

➕ Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.

➕ Are you a current subscriber to *PC ZONE*?

Answers on a postcard to: *PC ZONE* Chart Compo (CPCZ10A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford B01 5RZ. Closing date: Sep 20 2001

➕ Terms and conditions: winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

Max Payne is good fun, but it could have been longer. Then again, it might just have got boring. In six months no one will remember it anyway I don't reckon, just like most of the action films it is copying.

rally_vincent

Who would spend £50 on a train simulator? Is the PC world plagued with trainspotters? I'm glad to see that the *Baldur's Gate II* expansion is above the *Diablo II* expansion where it so rightly deserves to be. *Flashpoint* is a brilliant war sim and I'm glad to see it high in the charts. I've been waiting for *Max Payne* for a while now, but will it follow *Black & White* and be discarded in a few months? *Black & White* is a great game, but the fun wears off after a bit.

Hunam

Hmm. *Max Payne* goes straight to number one even though it wasn't promoted very well. No reviews in mags or on the Net till after it was out. Lucky for them there was enough hype for everyone to buy it anyway. I'll wait for *ZONE*'s verdict I think.

solitaire55

The chart looks good, with some smashers like *BGII*, *Half-Life*, *Diablo II* and *Black & White*, but personally I don't think *Microsoft Train Simulator* will go that far. My favourite out of this list is *Baldur's Gate II: Throne Of Bhaal*, a true RPG.

mrplastic1

When's *The Sims: Shooting Spree* coming out?

Newbreed

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

Well, despite the bizarre media blackout, *Max Payne* wastes no bullet-time and shoots straight to the top of the charts. There it will stay for some weeks too, as it is a definite crowd-pleaser. A few over-enthusiastic reviews won't hurt sales either, though whether it lasts more than a couple of months is another question.

Microsoft's anorak-clad *Train Sim* also shot to the top of the charts on release (as Prez predicted), though it's now been relegated to third place. Train games should not be underestimated. They're so big in Japan that there was actually a train controller peripheral released for consoles – all it did was switch on or off, but they loved it. So if you're scared now, just wait till you've got one of those sitting next to your Razer mouse.

Anthony Holden

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEARS AGO
1 F1 Grand Prix 3 *(Hasbro)*
2 The Sims *(EA)*
3 Icewind Dale *(Interplay)*
4 Diablo II *(Havas)*
5 Shogun: Total War *(EA)*

2 YEARS AGO
1 Kingpin: Life Of Crime *(Interplay)*
2 SW: The Phantom Menace *(Activision)*
3 Hidden & Dangerous *(Take2)*
4 Aliens Vs Predator *(Fox)*
5 Champ Man 3 *(Eidos)*

5 YEARS AGO
1 F1GP *(MicroProse)*
2 Duke Nukem 3D *(US Gold)*
3 Theme Park *(EA)*
4 Civilization II *(MicroProse)*
5 Champ Man 2 *(Domark)*

Emerging from stasis

French developer/publisher Cryo makes renewed efforts to come out of cold-sleep

If ever an argument was required to support the impression that the French are different from the rest of us, it's in the kinds of games they play. We're not talking about Petanque either, although that's a bit on the fruity side as well, but the kind of torturous historical adventure games made by the market leaders in the genre, Paris-based development house Cryo.

Titles such as *Atlantis*, *Egypt*, *Pompei* and *China* are sneered at by most of us, with their woefully outdated game mechanics and negligible level of interactivity, yet they sell by the truckload on the Continent, making Cryo one of Europe's leading software developers. All this point and click nonsense has done little for their reputation in other territories, but all that could be about to change. Armed with a new, more global outlook, increased product diversity and some promising new development teams, Cryo could finally be set to throw off the mantle of shame and use its considerable development muscle for the cause of good.

PC ZONE recently visited Cryo at its sizeable Paris HQ to have a good look at their new line-up, and found plenty of reason for optimism in the mixed bag of gaming goods on offer. However, a glance around the five titles covered here will reveal that Cryo has a long and difficult battle ahead of it.

FRANK HERBERT'S DUNE

While recent titles such as *Roland Garros* have been well-received outside France, not since they created the original *Dune* back in 1992 has Cryo made a significant impact on the gaming world. It seems appropriate then that, of their current line-up of games in production, one in particular stands out from the B-grade licences and uniquely Gallic offerings as showing great potential: *Frank Herbert's Dune*. Widescreen Games, the team working on this title, includes most of the people responsible for *Outcast*, making it worthy of our attention straight off the bat.

Essentially a third-person action adventure, the game will put you in the role of *Dune* hero Paul Atreides, covering a two-year period brushed over in the original novels, just after he's escaped to Dune and hooked up with the local spice-junkies, the Fremen. The gameplay will alternate between two basic styles, one emphasising stealth-based action and the other adventure elements.

The emphasis on variety was apparent when we played through the first action stage, which opened with a cinematic chase across the dunes by a mightily impressive sandworm. There followed a bit of sneaking around stabbing guards, eventually leading to the infiltration and disabling of a spice harvester. Not too shabby.

Some of the most interesting features planned for the game are yet to be implemented, such as Fremen voice powers that can be used to paralyse enemies, regain health and so on, but on present form this is looking like one to watch. With the online only *Dune Generations* also looking extremely pretty over at subsidiary Cryo Networks, Cryo could finally have rediscovered its lucky charm in the *Dune* licence.

Cryo/Widescreen • ETA Late 2001 • http://dune.cryogame.com

Paul's mission is to prove himself worthy to the Fremen...

...and eventually become the Messiah. Ambitious, isn't he?

MEGARACE 3

A refreshing spin on the genre.

On first glance just another *Wipeout* clone, *MegaRace 3* actually doesn't look that bad on closer inspection. While the guts of the game is essentially a better-looking version of *Wipeout*, Cryo has added a loosely narrative-based campaign mode to the formula. So instead of just racing futuristic hoverships around a set of narrow tracks, you'll also be able to fly solo missions with level objectives and a variety of hazards, including end-level bosses to tackle in a kind of 3D-shooter fashion. Still not interested? Fair enough, but this is likely to do well on PS2.

Cryo • ETA October • http://megarace3.cryogame.com

ATLANTIS 3: THE NEW WORLD

She's famous in France, apparently.

Just to prove it hasn't forgotten which side its bread is buttered on, Cryo is trotting out this sequel to the *Myst*-styled *Atlantis* games. Apparently the big deal about this new point-and-click snooze-fest is the fact that the heroine has the actual voice and features of actress Chiara Mastroianni. If you too are asking 'Who in the blue hell...?' you're on the same page as us with this one. Of course it will go down a treat with the undiscerning folk who made *Myst* a top-seller, but that's hardly a recommendation.

Cryo • ETA September • http://atlantis.cryogame.com

FROM DUSK TILL DAWN

This first/third-person shooter based on the cult film is the other great white hope for Cryo. Developed by Gamesquad, the team responsible for the above-average *The Devil Inside* and featuring the talents of Hubert (*Alone In The Dark*) Chardot, it's a vampire-laden gore-fest set after the events of the film, which finds hero Seth Gecko imprisoned on a high security prison tanker for his unruly behaviour in the Titty Twister. Of course, when vampires threaten to take over the whole ship, it's Seth, the prison guards and some special forces blokes versus vampires.

Weapons are set to include a sniper rifle, disc launcher, flame-thrower, and a crossbow firing holy water capsules. We also like the way you can ram a stake through the hearts of fallen vampires to make sure they stay down. A number of survival horror elements are evident in the gameplay, including a general shortage of ammo, as well as creepy moments with invisible enemies and completely pitch black sections of gameplay. If *From Dusk Till Dawn* can successfully merge its FPS and survival horror sides it could be something special, and as it recently went gold we'll be letting you know next issue.

Cryo/Gamesquad • ETA August 22 • http://dusktilldawn.cryogame.com

Survival horror meets FPS on a tanker full of vampires. Cool.

SHADOW OF ZORRO
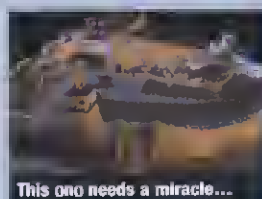
This one needs a miracle...

According to our hosts in Paris, Zorro is the second most widely known fictional hero in the world, after Superman. How they came to this unlikely conclusion we can't be certain, but we imagine Spidey and Batman wouldn't be too chuffed to hear about it, not to mention Lara and Mario. Unfortunately for Zorro his first ever computer game is unlikely to push him into the number one spot, as it's looking utterly abysmal. It's basically a swashbuckling rip-off of the classic PS1 sneak 'em up *Tenchu: Stealth Assassins*, with a few elements inexpertly nicked from *Metal Gear Solid* and other stealthy hits. Which wouldn't be so bad if it didn't look second-rate in every department, and boast one of the worst combat systems ever devised. Instead of real-time sword fighting, which you'd think would be a selling point of any Zorro game, the combat is handled in a rhythm action style, wherein you must mimic a series of key combinations flashed up on the screen to perform each sword strike. If successful, you get to watch a cut-scene of Zorro parrying and thrusting with customary aplomb, if not, you see another cut-scene of the enemy making a fool of him. Stupid, stupid, stupid.

Cryo/In Utero • ETA Christmas • http://zorro.cryogame.com

SHORTS
SHOGO SEQUEL

Shogo: Mobile Armor Division was easily the second-best first-person action game of 1998. Developed by AvP2 creators Monolith, its unfortunate release within weeks of *Half-Life* meant most people overlooked it. A heady animé-inspired cocktail of cartoon FPS combat and camp *MechWarrior* action, it's one of the few games crying out for a sequel. Well wouldn't you know it, *Shogo 2* is on the way, again from Monolith and again using the latest in LithTech technology. However, we're told that the game, far from being a first-person actioner, will instead be a *Metal Gear Solid* inspired stealth 'em up, and will once again star Sanjuro, the love-torn glove puppet hero of the first game. No release date is known, but in the grand traditions of *PC ZONE* we can exclusively deduce that it won't be anytime soon.

PLAY FOR FREE AT THE PLAYING FIELDS

1 HOUR FREE WORTH £6

The PlayingFields
DISCOUNT SLIP

There's a bar to retire to when you get tired of fragging.

Name ....Date Of Birth ....

Address...

....

Email Address ....

Tel No ....Date ....

➕ This discount slip entitles one person to play for one hour free of charge on one occasion between August 23 and September 20, 2001, at The Playing Fields, 143 Whitfield Street, London W1, UK. You must be 14 years of age or older in order to participate in this offer. The slip must be filled in correctly and must be the original from a copy of *PC ZONE*, otherwise it will not be valid. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer. Only one slip per reader per issue.

A gamer's paradise, The Playing Fields is a computer games bar where you can relax and play games the way they are meant to be played – with someone else. Just a 30-second walk away from Warren Street Tube station (Northern and Victoria lines), you can find it at 143 Whitfield Street, London W1.

Once there, you can jump on one of the 23 state-of-the-art machines on offer, and either play via a network or over the Net on games such as *Counter-Strike*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Giants*, *Delta Force: Land Warrior*, *Sacrifice*, *Rune* and many others. Each machine boasts an AMD 1.1GHz processor, 128Mb SDRAM, a 17in monitor and a NVIDIA Geforce 2 GTS graphics card – no less.

You have to be aged at least 14 to play and ID may be required. The Playing Fields is open seven days a week from noon to 11pm (10pm on Sundays). For prices and more information, check out www.theplayingfields.co.uk.

And for a free hour of play, simply fill in the slip (left) and take it along with you to The Playing Fields.
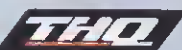
EMULATION ZONE

IN OUR NEW REGULAR FEATURE, STUART CAMPBELL REPORTS ON THE LATEST HAPPENINGS IN THE WORLD OF EMULATION

I know what you're all thinking. Firstly you're thinking "Oh God, not more of this retro bollocks. All this old stuff is all very well, but it doesn't get the beers in, does it?" But you can take a step back yourself if you're saying that, firstly, because emulation isn't about nostalgia, it's about culture. And secondly, because now emulation *can* get the beers in. Interested? Thirsty? Read on.

With the recent advent of pinball emulation, it seemed that the virtual reconstruction of amusement arcades was all but complete. Except, of course, there was still one thing missing – fruit machines. Despite being more popular than either videogames or pinball, fruit machines are inexplicably poorly represented in the world of PC games, with only a tiny handful of rubbish home-grown fruity games on offer.

"It's not inexplicable at all," I hear some of you cry. "Nobody wants to play fruit machines on a PC because if you can't win money, there's no point." Right. Remind me again what the 'point' of playing, say, *Diablo 2* is? So you'll know what to do the next time you meet a *real* shape-shifting werewolf? Glad we got that one sorted out because I was starting to lose my thread. What was it again? Oh yeah, fruit machine emulation.

However, the poor neglected fruity is neglected no longer. With the recent freeware release of Chris Wren's
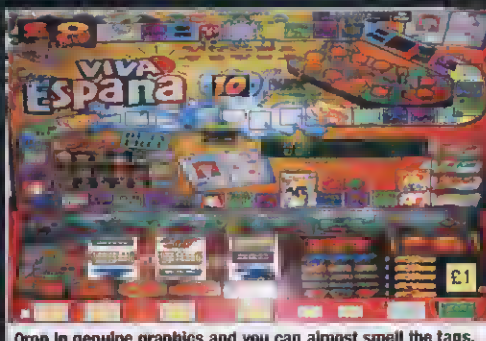
Drop in genuine graphics and you can almost smell the fags.

previously commercial and snappily-titled MPU3/4 emulator, almost 40 genuine fruit machines can now be played free on your PC, with all the proper sounds, adjustable settings and percentages (from "rip-off" to "utterly scandalous rip-off") as well as mouth-watering fruit symbols.

Many of the games are surprisingly entertaining in their own right (with such crappy jackpots compared to the million-dollar slots of Las Vegas, UK fruities *have* to be fun to play or no one would ever put money in them). But more exciting than that is the realisation you can use the emulator to learn how a particular machine plays
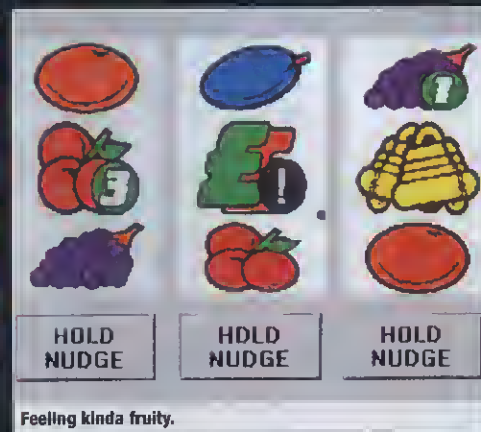
Feeling kinda fruity.

and behaves, then go down the boozer and skin it for a couple of free rounds. Nice.

The MPU3/4 emulator also provides a sharp lesson for those short-sighted fools in the games industry who would try to crush emulation at every turn. When the emu was released, Barcrest, the fruit machine firm who produces most of the machines emulated, attempted to bully the author into withdrawing it from sale. In compliance with their wishes, the author removed the copyrighted fruit machine ROMs which had been distributed with the purchase of the £50 emulator and, deprived of the chance to earn money from it, released the non-copyright-infringing version as freeware, leaving people to find the ROMs themselves. At a stroke, Barcrest managed to stop the emu from being used only by the tiny handful of people who were prepared to pay 50 quid for it, to being downloaded more than 10,000 times in the first few days of release. Clever, eh?

LINKS

✪ www.advsys.co.uk/homepages/maroney/main.htm – download the emulator

✪ http://communities.msn.com/FruitMachineEmulation – main discussion/news forum for the emu

Not quite the real thing, but getting there.
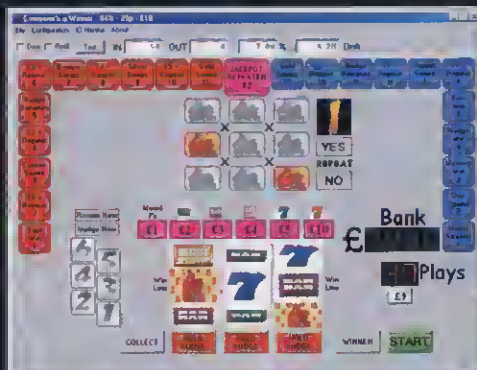
The original author has given up, but others are continuing.

SWAN FAKE

Throw your handhelds in the air...

One of the cultier games machines out there became the latest to bow at the feet of the mighty Emulation Goddess recently, with the release of the first version of Cygne, an emulator for the Bandai WonderSwan handheld. Never released here, the WonderSwan is a respectable (if distantly second) competitor to the GameBoy in Japan, and features some well-known brands like *Final Fantasy* in its software line-up. Cygne currently only emulates the mono version of the WonderSwan, and has no sound, but its compatibility rate is already impressive, and hopefully development will eventually encompass some of the little machine's impressive colour games.

Morrigan gets kicked, quite literally, to bits in Capcom's *Pocket Fighters*.
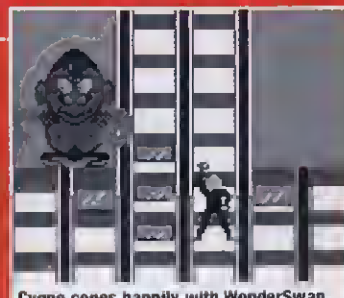
Cygne copes happily with WonderSwan games, which run vertically rather than horizontally, like *Crazy Climber*.

The Man who KNOWS

A PROPER CHARLIE

Prince Charles has dismissed computer games as the playthings of simple-minded cretins with no more right to walk **God's Earth** than a weasel. The opinionated royal expressed his sentiments at some book thing at the **British Museum**, bleating: "One of the great battles we face today is to persuade our children away from the computer games towards what can only be described as worthwhile books." Slamming gaming as nothing more than a shallow pastime pursued by a generation of slack-jawed third-wits, the heir to the throne blasted: "None of us can underestimate the importance of books in an age dominated by the computer screen and constant wish for immediate gratification." The Prince's comments have sparked a furious war of words with industry body **ELSPA**, who were quick to express their "surprise and disappointment" at his stultifyingly ill-informed outburst. Director **Roger Bennett** barked: "We could of course excuse his view as simply representative of an age group that did not grow up with computer games and therefore feels alienated from the medium. However, the Prince is an influential public figure and such statements could be damaging to an industry that in the last 20 years has emerged as one of the fastest growing and most creative in the UK." Seeking to heal the rift, ELSPA sent HRH a selection of games in an attempt to open his blinkered eyes to the educational benefits of the interactive medium. However, Charles would appear to still prefer more traditional pursuits, as witnessed at a recent polo match when he was hospitalised after being tossed from his horse like a rag doll.

Further reasoned argument reaches us from **Australia**, where three-year-old game, **Half-Life**, is being blamed for the shooting of a security guard at a **Melbourne** abortion clinic. **The Herald Sun** broke the news that "a computer game that rewards players for killing security guards and stealing their guns is being sold in Victoria. Players of *Half-Life* and *Half-Life: Opposing Force* can also make scientists at a research institute plead for their lives before shooting them dead and mutilating their bodies." It went on to reveal that add-on pack, **Blue Shift**, was released only two weeks before the murder, clearly implying that it was entirely responsible for the crime.

On a lighter note, **Eidos** has apologised to **French** archaeologist **Jean-Yves Empereur** for the "coincidental" use of a character with the same name and occupation in **Tomb Raider 4**. It has promised not to do it again.

Sports Interactive has signed an exclusive deal with **Umbro.com**, who will design, manufacture and sell **Champ Man** branded football kits. Still with *CM*, and *ZONE* contributor, **Steve Hill,** is to feature in a TV docu-snatch about the phenomenon. He granted a **BBC** film crew access to his luxury **London** apartment to enable them to capture the full horror of the addiction. The short news item is due to be screened at some godforsaken hour of the night. No problem for most *CM* players then.

Practically everything is moveable, smashable or edible.

Beardy Beardidity

The race for the silliest name gathers pace, with *Divine Divinity*

They say don't judge a book by its cover, and in equal measure don't judge a game by its name. *Divine Divinity* may be one of the most inane titles we've ever heard, but it's also a hitherto relatively unknown isometric RPG that could give the big boys of the genre a run for their groats. One of the most notable things about *Div Div*, apart from its very high-res good looks, is a fully interactive environment. Virtually everything you see can be picked up and used, boulders can be thrown at enemies, herbs and plants can be used to mix up potions and poisons, while the local fauna can be hunted down for a bit of grub. The game is setting itself up to appeal to both the *Diablo II* hack'n'slash RPG crowd and the more hardcore *Baldur's Gate* lovers, which is no easy task. *Diablo* devotees will enjoy the huge immersive environments, populated with all sort of beasties just asking for a good kicking and some seriously fun spells, while the Tolkienesque storyline and advanced AI will undoubtedly appeal to more the more traditional RPGers. Look out for our preview next issue.

Larian Studios • Q4 2001 • www.larian.com
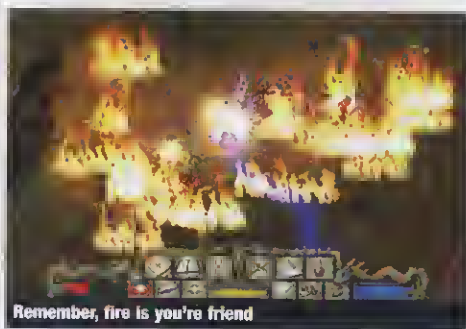
Remember, fire is you're friend

Raziel returns

The chinless wanderer returns in *Soul Reaver 2*

We like a bit of soul devouring as much as the next person, and we pricked up our ears when we heard Crystal Dynamics' third-person reaving sim *Soul Reaver 2* was once again scheduled to hit the PC. Originally targeted to the PC, the sequel to 1999's hit *Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver* was later ill-advisedly poached for the Dreamcast and then PS2, but Eidos has now announced that *Reaver 2* is set to return to its rightful plane of existence later this year. Picking up where *Legacy Of Kain* left off, the game will take Raziel back through time to periods before, during and after the first two games in the series, and will feature all the usual plane-shifting, soul-devouring, and puzzle-solving of the previous game. The screenshots already show off some lovely clean level design, which appear to have abandoned the platform elements of the previous title in favour of more of a straight action/adventure style. Crystal Dynamics has also promised us plenty of the kind of real-time environment morphing seen in Raziel's last outing. We expect to have a hands-on look at its efforts before next issue.

Crystal Dynamics • Winter 2001 • www.eidos.com

Raziel's lookin' good, apart from that lower jaw thing.

MISSING IN ACTION

These games are MIA. We make like Chuck Norris and track them down

LOOSE CANNON

A year ago this game was the best looking thing around. With a healthy mix of third-person driving and shooting in an assortment of immaculately rendered near-future cityscapes, it was at the top of more most wanted lists than Osama bin Laden. However, two years and $5million into development, developer Digital Anvil was bought out by Microsoft and the game was left in limbo. In May an unlikely saviour appeared in the form of Ubi Soft, who acquired the rights and promptly farmed the project out to unproven development company Sinister Games, best known for dodgy *Dukes Of Hazzard*-licensed console outings. Since then nothing has been heard of the title, but until we get another look at it, we remain deeply concerned about its progress.

Sinister Games • ETA TBC • www.sinistergames.com

A couple of loose cannons yesterday.

TORN

This LithTech powered 3D RPG from the team behind *Planescape Torment* was looking quite promising when we last checked it out, and was being eagerly anticipated by fans of traditional *Baldur's Gate*-style RPGing. Unfortunately, Interplay confirmed last month that this title has officially been canned. Developer Black Isle Studios has laid off some of the *Torn* team and reassigned the rest to other internally-developed RPGs. Neither Black Isle nor Interplay have offered any reason for the cancellation, nor identified the projects the remaining members are working on. We'll be chasing them up in the near future.

Black Isle • KIA • http://torn.blackisle.com

Torn isn't just MIA, it's come home in a body bag.

WARCRAFT III

Blizzard has an unrivalled reputation for releasing games only when they are polished to a bright gleam, and true to this policy, it has made the decision to push the release date of *Warcraft III* back into next year. Hopefully this will allow it time to do something special with this keenly awaited sequel, the development of which has already travelled some rocky ground when the mooted inclusion of RPG elements was scrapped in favour of a straight RTS style. "Our development team is hard at work finalising the product," states the official announcement, "and we look forward to bringing you an outstanding RTS game in 2002."

Blizzard • ETA 2002 • www.blizzard.com/war3

Keep polishing Blizzard, and we might just get the game next year.

ELITE 4

It's the long-awaited third sequel to one of the most revered games in British gaming history. Yes it's in development, and no it won't be seen for a long time yet. Why should you care when the last episode in the series was such a turkey? Well, *Elite 4* promises to return to its roots, recapturing the ambience of the original classic with all the benefits of cutting edge graphical technology. We had a chat with *Elite* mastermind David Braben recently about the status of his latest space trading epic, and all he could tell us was that development had hit a few snags and to keep on waiting...

Frontier Developments • ETA TBA • www.frontier.co.uk

This is all anyone has seen of Richie's most wanted game.

GHOST RECON

Less fiddling, more bullet-riddling

O K, so *Ghost Recon* is the latest squad-based tactical actioner from Red Storm, the folks that brought us *Rainbow Six* and *Rogue Spear*. But before you start groaning, no, this is no mere sequel aimed at wringing the last drops out of the Tom Clancy licence, it's a whole new thing. New engine, new weapons and vehicles, new mission types, but most important of all, no tedious planning stage at the start of each mission. You see, Red Storm did a little research and found that the vast majority of *Rainbow Six* players skipped the planning and went straight for their balaclavas. And we thought it was just us...

Of course, the heart and soul of *Rainbow Six* will still be in place, and you'll still issue commands and waypoints to your spec op chums, you'll just do it in the field instead of the locker room. The close-quarters battling is also being replaced by open-air incursions and massive forested battlefields. Taking out tanks and choppers with rocket launchers is only one benefit of this new focus...

Red Storm Entertainment • ETA Late 2001 • www.redstorm.com
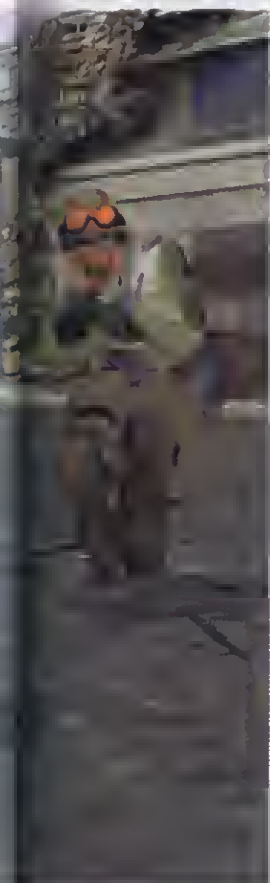
MAILBOX
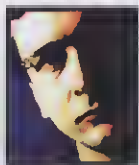
Got something to say to us? Nice, nasty or otherwise, get it off your chest and if it's interesting enough we'll print it

⊗ **ANSWERED BY** Dave Woods

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON

PC ZONE is giving away not one, but two of these wonderful GameVoice contraptions from Microsoft to the writer of the Star Letter. If we don't consider any of the letters to be worthy we'll just keep them for ourselves. Using the GameVoice, you can communicate with other players online and give yourself a massive advantage over the Luddites who have to stop and type instructions. They're priced at £49.99 each and are worth every single penny.

HYPOCRITES

It was with great interest that I read the *Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force Expansion Pack* review in issue 105. I have to say that the PCZ Verdict section appeared to provide pretty good information, but one of the 'downers' was: 'No one playing the new modes'.

Being a *Trek* fan myself (yes, laugh if you must), I found it incredible that you could say this. Believe it or not, if there are people like me then there are people who would play the new modes if they could – the trouble, as you pointed out yourselves, is the lack of servers.

You hypocrites! You say that the modes are good, and that the lack of servers is a problem, so why aren't you running *Elite Force PC ZONE* game servers? You complain that nobody will stray from the traditional game types, but which game types do your servers provide? *Quake III*, *Unreal Tournament* and *Team Fortress Classic*.

I believe that it was wrong of you to slag off the game if you are not prepared to help it succeed. All I can assume is

that you want the game to be a failure, and I don't think this is an appropriate approach for a magazine that is otherwise great. I am sure that other *Star Trek* fans are also horrified by your attitude and I hope that you will sort out this situation now. Remember, you have only yourselves to blame for this.

Robert Lacey

⊗ I appreciate your point, but have you stopped to think about how many games are released with multiplayer capabilities? Not to mention the hundreds of mods. We can't supply servers for all these games; instead we look at

> ❝Why are you lot so miserable? All you do is sit around all day playing games, and then maybe write a few words about them❞
>
> **ROB TARKLING MAKING US FEEL BAD ABOUT OURSELVES**

what games are popular and run servers for those. If a game either doesn't sell, or isn't played by its fans then we're not going to run a server on the off-chance someone might come along to play.

SMILE

Why are you lot so miserable? All you do is sit around all day playing games, and then maybe write a few words about them. It's not exactly a hard life is it? And yet all your photographs in the magazine look like you've just endured a couple of hours with Jim Davidson. How about a little smile every now and again?

Rob Tarkling

⊗ I tried it once and it hurt.

EX-PC ZONE GENIUS

Let me begin by saying that your magazine is definitely

the best there is for PC gamers. (*Oh, you're too kind – blushing Ed.*) Even though I've never read any other PC magazine I'm still quite sure that I'm right. (*Sigh – Ed.*)

Anyway, I'm writing with a hint of new-found wonder

about your magazine. It seems as though there's something about *PC ZONE* that turns its contributors into over-achievers. Allow me to explain. I remember Charlie Brooker and David McCandless disappearing from your pages quite quietly, presumably to work for another magazine. This doesn't really seem to be the case. I checked Macca's homepage a while ago and found out that he's now some kind of award-winning musician. That's some departure from being the überfragmeister and losing a *Doom* World Championship deathmatch to some kid with a bum-fluff 'tache.

What's stirred me to write this though is the fact that after watching the Brass Eye Special on Channel 4 I found one Charlie Brooker listed in the 'written by' section. I was pretty shocked. I knew CB as a freelance games journalist who was seriously damn funny, whether in reviews or in his works of 'art' such as 'Cruelty Zoo', but I never expected him to aid in disgusting the nation on mainstream television (by the way I thought it was a fantastic programme so pass on my compliments to CB if you can). So my question is, what goes on there that's making the people that leave so successful? I can only presume that Duncan MacDonald aka Mr Cursor is designing a faster-than-light drive now which would explain why he didn't reprise his back page position for one last time. Have you guys been selling your souls to the devil or something in return for World Exclusives and success?

LazyGit

⊗ We'd settle for a small property in the South of

You start playing it, and we'll start hosting it.

298

Shokupan was melted by rezpeeto's plasmagun

You fragged Shokupan
1st place with 2
Shokupan

Railgun

19 100 100

19 20 2 0

Anthony Holden's rubbish at *Quake III*, but he gets really wound up if you tell him. Ssshh...

France and enough food to barbecue and red wine to drink for the rest of our lives. Any offers?

JACKANORY

I am replying to the so-called 'opinion' of Steve Chicken (if that really is his name) from issue 105. He was going on about lack of storyline in games. Well if you're playing *Counter-Strike* for story you're playing for all the wrong reasons my friend. I play CS,TFC and *QIII* as much as possible, and I don't play to get a thrill out of the plot, I play for the thrill of getting one over on my mates and the harmless banter that goes with it. In fact, I don't really care if I win or lose as long as I manage to have a laugh. The bottom line? If you want a story stick to online RPGs and play with pixies and flying fairies.

RJ Haworth

DVD, WHY?

Why can't developers release games on DVD? Take the *Baldur's Gate* series, which was originally spewed out on about 400 CDs, which you had to switch in order to play through the game. Just as I managed to finish this, they went and released it on a

You don't fool us. That's still a CD dressed up in DVD's clothing.

special DVD edition. Well thanks, but you were about six months too late. Actually, come to think of it, why do we have DVD drives on our PCs? I don't want to watch films on my monitor, and there are no enhanced games or even multi-CD games like *Baldur's Gate* on DVD. What the hell is the point? Rant over.

Richard Landers

❂ What is the point indeed? And hopefully there are some publishers out there who feel the same way. After all, you've embraced DVD packaging...

A VIKING SPEAKS

It's not often that I bother with writing to you guys, so I'll get straight to the point. Apart from a little praise now and again, the only really useful comments to my mind are criticisms. I've not had any of those – up till now. But this time you guys have crossed the line. I'm referring to your minute feature on the upcoming *Valhalla Chronicles* in issue 106, p86. For the amount of space used, you could at least have got your facts straight. Surely, knowledgeable people such as yourselves will know that Valhalla was not an 'area' but a hall, the Hall of the Slain, home to the spirits of only the bravest of Viking warriors.

Thus, you will not gain 'access to other parts' of it. 'It' is 'it', not a whole playing area. Checking the site myself, it is you who have mistakenly brought your readers to believe otherwise. The site itself states: 'Valhalla Chronicles will not only take you to Miklagård (Constantinople) and Vinland (North America) but also to Valhalla, Svartalfheim, Hel and Muspelheim.'

In other words, Valhalla is merely one of the many places that you get to access.

Secondly... erm, guys... come on... what are you doing? 'The evil Ragnarok

himself – have you got no idea? Ragnarok is the Viking equivalent of the Christian doomsday or an Apocalypse if you please. It is where the Viking Gods will face the evil Giants of Jotunheim, and the world will end and be reborn – according to Viking mythology. (Those old coots, eh?) Here's hoping you will print this in order to re-establish the wisdom of your readers in relation to the Vikings.

Patriotic Scandinavian and undeniably yours

Jakob Gronkjaer

P.S. Other than that, your mag is great, and the site is on a par with it...

❂ Richie says: 'I'm really, really, really sorry. Can you get me a discount at IKEA?'

NOWT FOR FREE

Last month's article on the current state of gaming raised some interesting and valid points on both the demise of creativity and the lone programmer but missed what I feel was one key point. The death of Public Domain. In the days of old it was possible to send off a tape along with a nominal fee to cover postage and your tape would wing its way back to you packed full of games. OK some of them might not have been that good, but they were free and that's the point.

The Internet should have heralded the grand age of Public Domain – you wouldn't even need to send a tape off, you could just

download all the stuff from the Net – and I would have thought it would have been teeming with the stuff, but it's not. Why is this? The answer is simple. Public Domain has been replaced with shareware. The basic premise of shareware seems to be this: you download an average puzzle-type game, play it for a little while. Chances are you find it to be quite fun but then discover that if you want to play it anymore you have to send whoever produced the game 30 quid or they'll come round your house and duff you up.

The reason that no current bedroom programmer has achieved cult status akin to Jeff Minter is that people simply aren't willing to shell out that much money for a shareware game when you can get a *Deus Ex* for that price. The current crop of bedroom programmers need to realise that they're not going to get rich from what they're doing now – they should be doing it for fun not money. It's not just the big boys that need to be stirred out of their 'profit-motivated simple mindedness' – the little folks could do with some shaking up too.

Will Stevens

❂ Surely a bit harsh? Aren't you ignoring the rash of modders, who spend their entire lives making fantastic free games like *Counter-Strike, Quake III Jailbreak* and *Painkeep*?

20 3 2

110 96

Painkeep is free and it's brilliant – check out our review on page 96.

My liege, my liege, it's...

DUNGEON

SIEGE

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Gas Powered Games
PUBLISHER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.gaspowered.com
OUT Autumn 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Massive RPG with seamless transitions from one play area to the next. Move from outdoor to indoor environments with no load screens.

- Advanced formations system, which gives you complete control of how your characters face the enemy in battle.

- The On-the-fly character development system allows you to customise your characters' class and change their areas of specialisation whenever you choose.

Role-playing games and stats. The two are synonomous. One cannot live without the other. Generations of gamers have grown up playing RPGs and can happily rattle off all kinds of stats. Dexterity, melee, intelligence, wisdom, agility, defence, attack... it goes on, and on, and on, until you reach the point where one RPG blends into another and it takes something really special to make one that stands out from the crowd.

Gas Powered Games has taken a long hard look at the genre, and decided that the one thing missing from most modern-day RPGs is action, pure and simple. To this end, it set out to make an RPG that's easy to pick up and play, that concentrates on real-time action as opposed to turn-based, and features plenty of splats, as opposed to a myriad of stats.

It's a brave move. Pointy-hat enthusiasts are renowned for their penchant for meddling with huge tables of statistics before encountering an enemy. For Gas Powered Games to succeed in its simplistics-over-statistics endeavours, *Dungeon Siege* would have to have a few surprises up its sleeve. Well, there was only one way to find out. I tracked down the team at its Kirkland HQ and was given a full hands-on demo and taken through the basics of the game mechanics. This is what I saw.

GOING UNDERGROUND

I'm sitting in a meeting room with Chris Taylor, president of Gas Powered Games and designer of *Dungeon Siege*. The lights are dimmed, and a large screen at the back of the room is prepared to fire up the ➡

Battles will be truly brutal affairs.

In one ear and out the other side.

game that RPG fans have been talking about for the past year, but have yet to see in action.

The character creation screen appears. This is where it first becomes obvious that *Dungeon Siege* is not your typical RPG. Your choices here are minimal. Choose a male or female character, mess about with aesthetics like hair and clothes colour, name your character and head straight into the action. Chris makes a comment about games that force you to go through a complex process of selecting stats: it's clear he is not interested in delaying players from getting straight to the core of the game. I ask him at this point if it's possible to customise your character through a stats system if you want to. He replies that it's perfectly possible to do that, but it doesn't happen through a laborious stats system at the beginning of the game and he promises all will be revealed soon. We move onward.

The first thing I notice while the game engine plays out the introduction (which introduces the player to the storyline) is a detailed graphic environment. The characters are big and colourful, the scenery is lush and alive, the buildings are lovingly crafted. It's clear even at this early stage that *Dungeon Siege* is a sophisticated piece of work indeed. Unlike its action-based counterpart

Diablo 2, which uses a bland, ageing 2D engine and rudimentary graphics, *Dungeon Siege* boasts a hugely impressive 3D engine, with cameras that give you the power to view every aspect of the action from whatever angle you choose. So, first impressions are favourable.

The initial cut-scene that introduces the plot is short, and straight to the point. It's in stark contrast to the lengthy cut-scenes and plot development movies we've seen in other games of this ilk. The intention here is the same as it was on the character creation screen: cut the excess dross and get straight into the action. The no-nonsense approach evident in every aspect of the game so far also makes an appearance when it comes to the logic behind the character development system.

STAYING IN CHARACTER

Rather than have the player choose a character class at the beginning of the game, *Dungeon Siege* keeps track of the weapons and spells the player uses and adjusts class alignment accordingly. Thus, if you use melee weapons a lot, your character will level up as a fighter. If you consistently use spells, your character will gain levels as a mage. This is effective as a behind-the-scenes method of steering your character in the direction you want him to go, and

"Come on love, giz a hug."

Now why didn't they just cut the bridge?

while it works well for the character you start with, the advantages of this system become more evident when you have other characters in your party too. Imagine a party of five. You can have two of them up front as melee types and supply them with all the melee weapons you come across so they raise their skills and act as a formidable front line for the rest of your party. Equip another with healing and defensive spells and you have a back-up healer for when you bite off more than you

your characters specialise in particular areas. For example, you can have a character who is reasonably efficient in melee, but is also handy with a bow, a sort of mix-and-match character who does not specialise in one area, but is pretty good at a few different things. It's an effective, intuitive system that gives you complete control over how each of your characters develop. It's likely to please both hardcore gamers who like tinkering about with different class types, and

> ❝Dungeon Siege is unique in that you can decide to what extent your characters specialise❞

can chew and things are going badly. Equip yet another with offensive magic and you have impressive firepower raining down on the opposition from the back of your line-up. Finally, a party member who is skilled with range weapons will cause a lot of damage from the back if you ensure he specialises in this skill. You then have the classic RPG team, and while it's true that you have this option in other games (except the classes are 'ready-made'), *Dungeon Siege* is unique in that you can decide to what extent

A FORM OF STRATEGY

A bit of planning never goes astray

You wouldn't expect an action-oriented game to bother much with such trivialities as strategic planning, but *Dungeon Siege* does exactly that with the introduction of advanced formations for your party, which can be changed at any time on the fly. You can place the characters in your party in any order you choose with a simple mouse click, you can even scale the formation to spread them out if you so desire, or rotate the party to ensure they are at their least vulnerable to the enemy. There are obvious advantages to using the formation facility. For example, you will probably want your fighters at the front and your spellcasters at the back and you can achieve this easily. But also, when everthing goes horribly wrong and your party is on the brink of popping its collective clogs, it might be a good idea to spread them out. If you can keep a couple of them alive, you may have a chance of saving your party from the ultimate death (see the Death Becomes You boxout).

Advanced formations bring an element of strategy to the proceedings.

No really John, there's a bloody dragon behind you.

casual gamers who don't really care which class their characters are and just want to use whatever weapons and spells take their fancy without worrying about what's going on behind the scenes.

Dungeon Siege's approach to inventory management is also unique. An 'extra-large' inventory gives you scope to carry all manner of stuff around with you, and the option to pick up everything in your immediate vicinity means you don't have to painstakingly pick up everything on the ground and place items in your backpack one by one. Simply draw a square around the area you want to cover (much as you do in a standard RTS), and your character will pick up everything there. It's a neat touch that takes the tedium out of inventory management and item acquisition and, like everything else in Dungeon Siege, it's designed to keep you focused on the gameplay without having to wrestle with the interface.

LOADING... PLEASE WAIT
How many times have you received this message (or a similar one) when entering a new area in a 3D game? Waiting for new areas to load is simply something PC gamers are used to. In keeping with Dungeon Siege's determination to keep players in the thick of the action at all times, transition from one area in the game to the next is seamless. There are no loading screens. Once you are in the game, you stay in it. I watch the screen as Chris takes his character from grassy woodlands into a large house with no pause in gameplay. It's one of those things that you don't really think about much (like I said, people are used to loading screens), but when you see Dungeon Siege in action you will truly appreciate how seamless transitions add to continuity of gameplay. He enters a dungeon, again we are taken seamlessly from an outdoor environment to an indoor environment without any break in the gameplay. Meanwhile, his character has been dispatching a variety of enemies along the way, and his skills have increased. Chris brings up the character panel and explains what's going on "behind the scenes". "This is the character panel," he says, referring to a small panel at the top left of the screen. "As you can see, we have different melee damage, range damage and armour rating. Our melee has gone up to level four, and our dexterity, intelligence and health have increased to reflect what our character has done in combat. We have a fair amount of stats to look at here, but we're trying to focus the game on adventure, combat and strategy.

DEATH BECOMES YOU

In Dungeon Siege you can recover

The only way you will die and face the dreaded load screen in Dungeon Siege is if your entire party is wiped out. When a character is badly injured and is close to death, he/she will simply become unconscious. You can, if you wish, revive them with a health potion, but if you don't, your character will slowly regain health and consciousness over time. This opens the way for an entirely new strategy in a game of this type. If, for example, you have eight characters in your party, and half of them look like their short career in pointy-hat land is coming to an end, you can pull them away from the fray. Pop a couple of potions in them, or have the rest of your team hold the fort while they regain lost health. The good thing about this is you always have a chance of recovering. In other games of this type, your characters wouldn't become unconscious, they would die and you'd have to take them to a temple to be resurrected, or worse, wait for the loading screen to appear and resign yourself to going back to an earlier save.

You won't die unless your entire party is wiped out.

DONKEY WORK

A trusty beast is what you'll need

Those of you who have played your fair share of RPGs will have noted that, generally speaking, these games provide you with 'loot' which you acquire from killing monsters and na'er-do-wells during your travels. Have you ever noticed that you always seem to end up leaving tons of good stuff behind because you can't fit it all in your inventory and you're too far away from the nearest town? Well, in Dungeon Siege, what you'll be needing in these situations is a couple of packmules. These trusty beasts will follow you everywhere and they can carry shedloads of stuff, so bring a few of them with you on your journey and you can keep literally everything you get from battle and sell it all when you get to the next town. Just make sure they don't get killed, or they won't be carrying anything.

Buy a packmule and you'll never have to leave any treasure behind again. Hurrah!

Now that's what I call an insect problem.

We're trying to move away from the old-skool stuff which is very number-heavy. Not everyone is engrossed by numbers. We want to keep things simple. If you're a fighter your strength goes up as your melee skill goes up, if you're a mage your intelligence goes up as your magic skill goes up, so things work out pretty much the way they would have done anyway if you were affecting all the individual stats yourself."

66 *Dungeon Siege* is vastly superior to other action RPGs (most notably *Diablo 2*) 99

BANGER: GOBLIN AT WORK

As with any real-time game, the enemy AI is of the utmost importance. Nobody wants a mindless click-fest, and predictable computer opponents will soon lose the player's attention. To demonstrate the flexibility of enemies in *Dungeon Siege*, Chris brings us to an area with a shaman who immediately launches a fireball attack on our character. "This is the shaman," says

Chris. "He has fairly primitive AI compared to some enemies, but he is capable of resurrecting fallen comrades. He can run away when he is losing, and if he gets low on mana he will retreat or maybe pull out a melee weapon and start attacking you with it. We want to keep surprising the player by having situations that come up that are different and really make the enemy seem like they are individuals instead of icons you just smash down."

He takes us to another dungeon, this one has stone gargoyles with death-ray eyes. "Notice how the music changes and the lights come on as we're going down the hallway towards the gargoyle," he says. "All these events can be scripted to create real suspense. All our dungeons are hand-crafted. We don't just have a random roll of the dice with random rooms and halls and a smattering of random monsters.

Every one of these rooms has been built specifically and laid out using our tools. We will be releasing all of these tools on the Web and people will be able to download them, build their own dungeons and create their own experiences. At the start of the game you saw what we call a non-interactive sequence – it's like a little story sequence in the game. People can take the tools and build levels and create little movie sequences inside them. If you want to play the part of dungeon master for your friends for example, you can build a dungeon, write a story, create your characters and write scripts for them. You can put all those elements into the game and share them with other people on the Internet."

It's certainly an ambitious game, and even from the demonstration it was obvious *Dungeon Siege* is vastly superior to other action RPGs (most notably *Diablo 2*, which is probably the closest point of comparison). Gas Powered Games' commitment to a fast-paced action game with an interface designed to make life easy for the player at every turn will undoubtedly ensure *Dungeon Siege* will appeal to hardcore RPGers and casual gamers alike. But only if they can successfully pull together all the elements they have incorporated thus far, and make sure they keep the attention of the player from start to finish (which appears to be the only potential downfall for an RPG based so heavily on action). We'll be returning to the game soon to look at the multi-player side of things, and needless to say, when it's released in early November, *PC ZONE* will be there with the first review. PCZ

PCZ What's the first game you played?
CHRIS Well that's a hard question to answer, but I actually think it was *Pong*. My mum bought it for me when I was a kid.
PCZ What's the best game you ever played?
CHRIS That's a tough one. I would say it's probably *Populous*. I was mesmerised by it – I played it for hours and hours.
PCZ What's the last game you paid good money for?
CHRIS The last game I bought was *Dune Emperor*. I bought it last week.
PCZ What's the worst game you've ever played?
CHRIS Well, I don't really talk about games I don't like. I think it's bad form to do that.
PCZ No it isn't, go ahead, spill the beans. You must have played some real stinkers.
CHRIS I tend to block a lot of the stuff I don't like from my mind. Games that aren't very good, I just tend not to remember having played them.
PCZ Have you ever been in a fight, and if so, who won?
CHRIS Does wrestling count?
PCZ Yes, that'll do.
CHRIS The last time I wrestled was with Alex Garden (creator of *Homeworld*). We were drunk. That was when he was 15 so I kicked his ass. But he's bigger now and I'm fatter, so I think he would kick my ass.

I get you. I remember anyone who looks a bit... old story.

| 86 | Arsenal | 2 | Man Utd | 0 |

Second Half

A.Cole — pen 17
Henry — 52

3 minutes of time added on indicated

Highbury, London

Who could believe a game that looks this boring boring could be so exciting?

Max Rowe News

Clubs desperate to renew contracts

Several media sources are reporting news of feverish contract negotiations at professional clubs across the globe.

Clubs are trying to persuade their star players to sign new deals before the new transfer system is in place.

Those players who do so will be unable to leave the club under the new regulations until their contract has expired.

It's tantamount to slave labour.

No one Excels like
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 01/02

After spending two weeks in a detox clinic, *Mark Hill* thought his *CM* addiction was cured. Then they gave him a new version to play

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Sports Interactive
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
WEBSITE www.sigames.com
OUT October

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- What do you mean, what's the big deal?
- All the latest data as well as the new FIFA transfer regulations
- Loads of tweaks and features
- More media and fan reactions
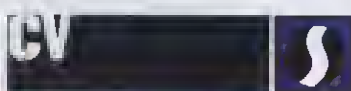
SPORTS INTERACTIVE

They don't mess around at Sports Interactive. They've been making *Championship Manager* games for years and they just keep getting better. With a big programming team and a massive network of scouts, it's come a long way from the Collyer brothers' bedroom. The list below only contains some of the major updates – we've only got so much space you know.

1992	CM1
1995	CM2
1997	CM 97/98
1998	CM3
1999	CM 99/00
2000	CM 00/01

Games journalists are not known for their dedication and sacrifice. We may be willing to knock back a few stiff ones in the name of our craft or stay in expensive Californian hotels for the sake of research, but ask us to get up early and do an honest day's work and we'll do nothing but bitch and moan. So you'll be surprised to hear what a stringent regime I put myself through to bring you this thoroughly researched preview. It may not come close to Robert De Niro's preparation for the role of Jake LaMotta for which he put on four stone (although weight gain was a curious side effect), but I think you'll agree it comes close.

UPDATE THE UPDATE

The most common accusation levelled at *Champ Man* updates is that they're nothing short of a con – that they don't bring enough new features to warrant shelling out £20 to £30 on a whole new game. To put these allegations to the test I spent five whole days playing *CM 00/01* (the previous update), before grabbing the early beta version of *CM 01/02* from the startled postman's hands. And when I say five whole days, I'm talking the full dinner-on-a-tray and potty-under-the-desk workout.

I even went to the trouble of downloading the latest free updates from the Web, so all the teams would be in the correct leagues and all the latest transfers implemented. If anyone was going to notice any worthwhile changes it was going to be me.

As always, the new tweaks and changes all seem like superficial polish when you first start playing. It's only when you're knee deep into a season that you realise how much they enhance the experience. The first things you notice in the new version are that you can now choose two players and compare them on a special screen, and make your scouts spy on your next opponents to analyse their strengths and weaknesses. Big deal, you think. Click on an unknown youngster from another team and you see his stats are all blank and are only revealed if you

> **❝It mirrors the real world with such unerring accuracy that it feels like you're actually there❞**

send a scout to investigate him. If you decide he's one to watch in the future you can make a note on him and make the game remind you in the future to check up on his progress. Intriguing, but still hardly worth the extra cash. Then suddenly the big signing you'd finally managed to coax from another team won't come because your team's wages are too
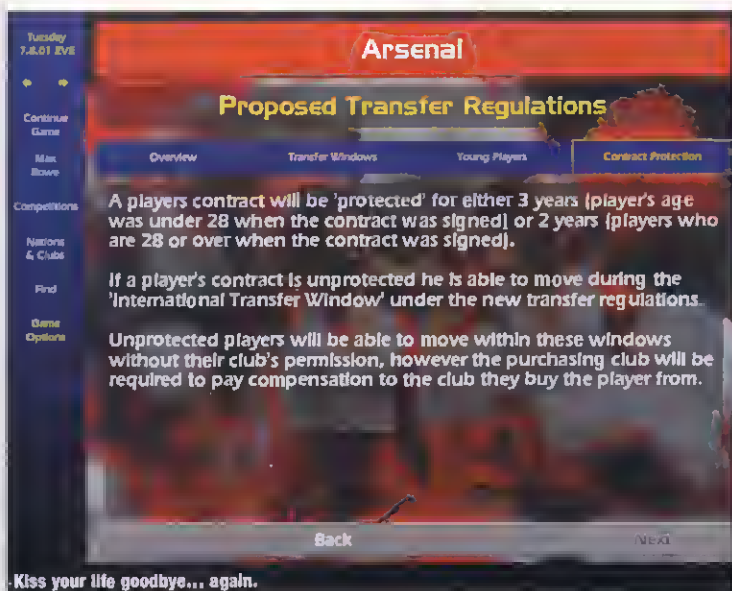
Kiss your life goodbye... again.

Issue ultimatums to the board and hope they don't fire you.

paltry, so you tell the board you need some extra cash, like you'd normally do. They come back with their usual refusal, and you notice you can issue them with an ultimatum. The next thing you know the fans are backing you and turning against the directors, who are left with no choice but to grudgingly give you some more dough. The big name signs and the fans explode with merriment and chant your name in the streets, while season ticket sales rocket.

OLDER AND WISER

Slowly, almost without realising it, you're drawn into the *CM* world more than ever before. Every tiny new feature adds another layer to the already rich texture of the game. This is why, despite a few whingeing old-timers who still revere the ancient *CM1*, the game just keeps getting better with each new release. And if the above isn't enough to convince you, how about the chance to appeal against player bans, see the new EU transfer system in action, send

recurrent Darren Andertons to surgery or change anything you want with the improved editor?

But leaving the new tweaks, improvements and added features aside for a moment, the mere data update alone is worth the money. The whole point of the game is that it mirrors the real world with such unerring accuracy that it feels like you're actually there, and no fan-created database can compete with the sheer number of people working

> **"Every tiny new feature adds another layer to the already rich texture of the game. This is why the game just keeps getting better with each new release"**

for Sports Interactive to ensure each stat is as close to the money as it can be. It's not just the right players in the right teams. Age, wages, personality, injuries, feelings towards the manager or even new positions they have been playing in are all equally important to create that sense of realism. The fact that each player's contract has
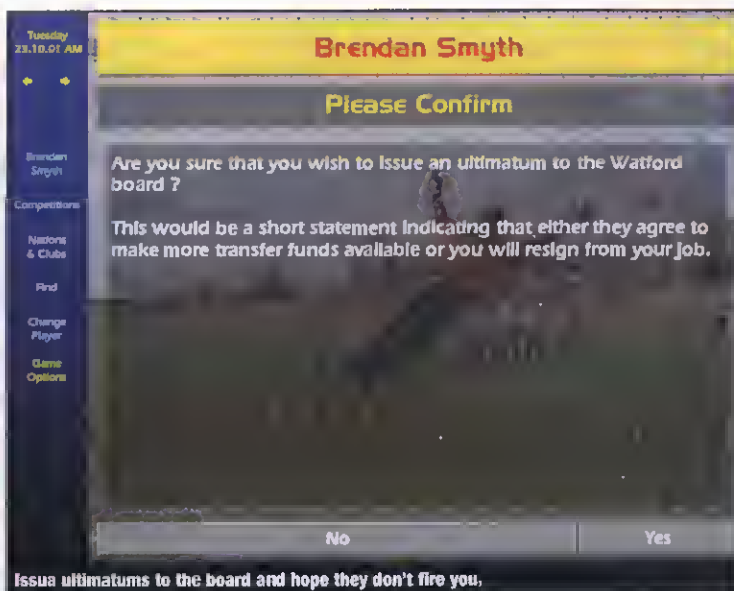
changed by a year alone has enormous repercussions regarding who is willing to move when you start dabbling in the transfer market at the start of the season.

TOMORROW'S WORLD

CM is not a game you approach casually. There is a commitment involved. You have to bring to it your imagination, concentration and a certain suspension of disbelief to experience it fully. If you do, what

many view as a spreadsheet with no graphics and hardly any sound suddenly becomes a portal into another reality. You control a real football team remotely by your PC and those names with a bunch of stats underneath them are transformed into real players with their own unique abilities and unpredictable personalities.

If you want further proof as to the accuracy of the data you only need to look at its ability to predict future stars. Us *CM* fans delight in bragging that we knew that young Argentinian Javier Saviola was going to turn into one of the hottest strikers in the world at least two years ago. He's now been presented as Barcelona's biggest signing of the season. Similarly, we knew Pablo Aimar was a little genius long before he signed for Valencia in the middle of last season, and we're sure you'll be hearing a lot about Riquelme in years to come (another player Barcelona is trying to sign – perhaps they're avid *CM* players). In the UK, Kieron Dyer, Steven Gerrard and Robbie Keane were all making splashes in the game before they were in real life. And young Wigan goalkeeper Roy Carroll was always

going to go to a bigger club; he's just joined Manchester United no less.

So if you want to find out who the stars of tomorrow are, play *Championship Manager*. And if you want to find out if it's really worth spending money on if you've got the last update... well, of course it is, what are you thinking? But it will look better in a couple of months' time when we review the finished version and give it a score. PZ

LOOKING AHEAD

CM4 is just a year away

CM 01/02 is the last update for *CM3* and SI are already hard at work on the next chapter of the series. The game will get a major overhaul that will affect its looks and introduce lots of the ideas they've been developing for the past couple of years while retaining the same playability.

The introduction of agents should add even more depth to transfer negotiations, while assistant managers will have a much greater role to play and the media will get even more involved. Training will also undergo severe improvements. And while the Collyers are sticking to their guns with their hatred of 3D players, there will be a top-down 2D representation of the matches to let you see what's going on with more detail than the stats could ever provide on their own.

The biggest feature though is the implementation of full online support, creating a much more believable alternate universe to the goblin-filled *EverQuest*. Get your ADSL connections ready because this could be the biggest game on PC ever. Also making an appearance on the Xbox and even the PS2 if Sony sort out a hard disk.

You'll be able to compare players on one screen.

No dice in sight
MONOPOLY TYCOON

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

○ It's a big-name brand
○ It's 3D, real-time and great fun
○ It's from the people who brought you *Risk II*

CV
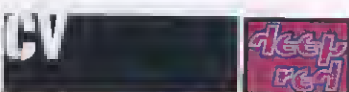
DEEP RED

The people at Deep Red have a long list of titles to their name from their time at Hasbro Interactive (which Clive Robert set up). Their new company has only released *Risk II* so far.

2000 *Risk II* – a fantastic adaptation of the classic board game

2001 *Monopoly Tycoon*

He's never won second prize in a beauty contest, but *Mark Hill* does own a Get Out of Jail Free card. Just in case

What a lovely game Monopoly is. You can sit around a table with your whole family, buying streets, erecting houses, watching granddad push the dear old boot around the board. Then he lands on your three-hotel Mayfair and all hell breaks loose. You snatch every last penny from his withering hands, the bank confiscates all his property and the whole table erupts into a maelstrom of abuse. Monopoly has been breeding cutthroat capitalists for more than 70 years, and it's this aspect of the board game Milton Keynes-based Deep Red is concentrating on this time round. "We've done two versions of *Monopoly* already [while at Hasbro Interactive]," says Deep Red director Clive Robert, "and we wanted to take it to the next level."

UNDER PRESSURE

The next level sees Monopoly transformed into a sophisticated 3D strategy game that concentrates on real-time multiplayer action and the sort of non-stop fun you'd never expect to see in a business title. But although it might look like a chunky and colourful version of *SimCity*, the nature of this particular beast couldn't be more different.

For starters, it's scenario-based rather than free-form. The bustling city is already there when you start a game, so you don't have to mess around laying down roads and sewage systems. The core of the game, no matter what the objective of each scenario, is to build shops according to demand and try and outsell your rivals.

Each single-player scenario and multiplayer game starts off in 1930,

> ## "When night falls the lampposts light the darkening streets, and business shifts to cinemas, restaurants and pool halls"

which is when the board game first appeared, so the game has a refreshingly old-fashioned style to begin with. It's all about corner shops and small businesses. As the years roll by (five per game day) different shops become available, so you can start replacing ballrooms and bars with nightclubs and pool halls, eventually progressing to today's amusement arcades and video stores.

Monopoly is, of course, a turn-based game, but Deep Red was determined to make this a more

intense experience and one which wouldn't allow anyone to go off and make a cuppa while thinking of their next move. "You're under pressure all the time, so there's no time to sit back and relax," says Clive. This soon became apparent while I was sitting in Deep Red's offices, thrown into a multiplayer match. I was still experimenting with the camera and asking probing questions such as "What does this button do?" when my more experienced opponents had already built a five-storey apartment block, a bakery and a butchers. Thankfully I had creative director Jon Law as my right-hand man, and I'd soon begun building my own empire. With his guidance and my opponents' over-confidence at facing a newbie, I actually managed to win. Developers know what bad losers journalists can be.

RISKY BUSINESS

Building shops might not sound that exciting, but as anyone who has played their brilliant *Risk II* will know, Deep Red knows a thing or two about gameplay. Checking up on each of your stores to see how many products they're selling becomes much more compelling when you have to start a

The board game's original counters (boot, racing car, etc.) have been turned into characters.

You can buy the railway stations, electricity boards and anything else from the board game.

price war with a neighbouring shop. The sound of money chinging into your bank account is incredibly satisfying and there are a load of features and details to keep you occupied. Auctions are *Monopoly Tycoon*'s way of leasing streets. You can build on any block as long as it isn't owned by another player with building rights. If you buy a street that your opponents have shops on you can stop them from building any more, as well as collecting a nice rent at the start of each day. Of course, once you own a colour set of blocks you can start constructing hotels to attract the city's tourists.

When night falls the lampposts start lighting the darkening streets, and business shifts to cinemas, restaurants and pool halls. It takes all your self-discipline not to go build-crazy just to see what happens if you open a nightclub next to your rival's bar. Luckily, Deep Red doesn't want to make you a slave to the bank as you are in the likes of *SimCity*. Going into the red is allowed (as long as you manage to bounce back into credit within 24 hours) and you can usually get away with spending large amounts of cash and still win as long as your investments are sound. "We started off making it so that your bank balance was one of the most important elements for winning," says Clive "but it just meant that nobody ever spent anything and the game got boring."

There's little chance of that happening in the version I've been happily playing with for the past week. *Monopoly Tycoon* looks set to successfully follow the original *Theme Park* in the addictive quality of its gameplay. You can forget all the *Theme*, *Tycoon* and *Sim* games from the last few years. There are already plans afoot to create a couple of add-on packs, one of which will include a game editor. Deep Red has also got a

PCZ What are your favourite games?
CLIVE Well, I loved *Commandos*, but it was too hard. *Syndicate* is probably my favourite game of all time and I still play a lot of *Age Of Empires*. I didn't like *SimCity 3000* too much though.

PCZ So a strategy boy then?
CLIVE Yes, I'm not an FPS sort of person. I find it frustrating that everyone is so good at *Counter-Strike* – there's no point playing it for me. You don't want to stand there being a complete wuss saying "Don't kill me straight away, chaps."

PCZ Does the name Deep Red have anything to do with going into big debt?
CLIVE No. It came about after a drunken dinner. Kev [Kevin Buckner, DR's co-director] asked the waitress what came into her mind when he said "Dark Red". She said "the occult and blood". When she came back with the coffee I said "What about Deep Red?" and she answered, "Velvet and sex!"

load of new scenarios up its sleeve and wants to do something with the criminal side of the game which isn't touched upon here. The jail was always a big part of the original, and the developers are keen to incorporate that element into it. Whether this includes hiring a bunch of goons to smash up your rival's shops or pick up protection money from small businesses remains to be seen, but you can see the potential for it already. I would put money on this being a huge game – it certainly deserves to be. **PCZ**

Not terribly realistic. Where's all the pigeon shit?

The people of Monopoly city are film-mad. Cinemas are always top of their list.

We have yet to witness any prohibition-style drive-by shootings.

Each block colour has a prestige rating. Building on blue costs a fortune.

The Russians are coming...

IL-2 STURMOVIK

There's a sturm brewing over the flight sim genre. *Dan Emery* finds out what's causing it

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER 1C/Maddox Games
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
OUT November 2001
WEBSITE www.bluebyte.net/il2-e/

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- *Il-2 Sturmovik* will be to flight sims what *Counter-Strike* is to the FPS
- Cutting-edge graphics, which are light years ahead of its peers
- Realistic physics and flight models
- Large scope for both air-to-ground and air-to-air missions
- 32-player network play

OLEG MADDOX

From the Russian military to the PC games industry, at least Oleg Maddox, the brains behind *Il-2* can say his life was never dull.

Oleg's CV makes interesting reading. Originally employed by the USSR government, he spent much of his life as an aeronautical engineer working for the military, until the collapse of the former Soviet Union. The government couldn't afford to pay Oleg so he started 1C Games, which folded in 1997 when Russia's economy hit trouble. After a brief stint as an importer/exporter of used cars, Oleg went back into the computer game world, this time as a developer as well as a publisher. He's been at it for three years now, but from what we've seen of *Il-2 Sturmovik*, it's time well spent.

Land it down there and you might get invited to appear on the Krypton factor.

There are some good things about Americans. They're friendly, talkative and really want to visit England and Europe because deep down many of them are really Italian/Greek/German. And not American, despite living in that country for seven generations. But there is one thing, bless, that Americans generally are not, and that is clued up on European history. The classic flick, *The Madness Of King George* was originally going to be called *George III* but a survey of Americans showed that they wanted to know why *George I* and *II* hadn't been screened. So we're willing to wager that when the utterly fantastic *Il-2 Sturmovik* is released in the United States, publishers Ubi Soft will get a spate of requests from a fair proportion of the American gaming community wanting to know if *Il-1 Sturmovik* is out on budget.

However, for the rest of the world there is no doubt that *Il-2 Sturmovik* is now the most eagerly awaited release for the whole sim community. *Aces High* is still using old-generation graphics. *WarBirds III*, while being slated for a September release, is still light years behind *IL-2 Sturmovik*. And *World War II Online* is so riddled with bugs, that Rentokil would have trouble clearing up the mess. Enter Russian developer and the man behind *Il-2 Sturmovik*, Oleg Maddox, stage left.

> **❝Heavily armed, the Il-2 Sturmovik could knock out almost any German tank or make mincemeat of infantry formations❞**

FUN FUN FUN

Il-2 Sturmovik flies in the face of popular opinion that 'the flight sim is dead'. Indeed a quick scan at **www.dogfighter.com** gives some credence to Oleg's claims that *Il-2* will indeed revitalise a rather stagnant genre. In the past two months alone, there have been more than 5,000 posts in the discussion group, compared to only 500 for all the other online sims

combined. But why all the interest? After all it's still just another flight sim isn't it? Not quite.

You see, while *Il-2 Sturmovik* is most definitely an old-skool flight sim, it's also gone back to some basic principles that other game developers would do well to heed. Make the game fun. Make it look stunning. Make it accessible to all. And give it something you cannot get with any other game. And *Il-2 Sturmovik* delivers on all counts.

The game is set on the Eastern Front in World War II, a hellish environment on which both sides fought to the death without giving an inch. While the ground war has been catalogued in some detail (the release of *Stalingrad* this year being proof of the rekindled interest in the 'Ost Front'), the air war has been largely ignored by both Hollywood and the games industry alike. Certainly at the end of WWII there was very little love between the West and USSR who, although allied against the common

Accuracy is the key word in this amazing simulation.

Rat-A-Tat-Tat.

enemy of Nazi Germany, swiftly became Cold War foes for the next 40 years. Against this backdrop, the USSR was certainly marginalised in western history books. The other big factor to be considered is that the majority of game development is in the US. The Americans are reluctant to admit the British Spitfire was better than their own P51D Mustang, so the Russians didn't have a prayer. Till now. You see, despite the arrogance of some developers, the flight sim community has overdosed with Pearl Harbor reruns, or American Bombers over Europe. Microsoft's *Combat Flight Sim II* utterly failed to impress, as there was nothing we hadn't all seen before. *Il-2 Sturmovik* is completely different.

MORE GCSE HISTORY

The Eastern Front was a very different sort of air war to the one in the West. While the RAF/USAF was engaged in strategic bombing of Germany's cities and heavy industry, the war in the East was far more tactical. The vast bulk of operations were in support of the land war, and as such the evolution of aircraft were very different. The Il-2 Sturmovik was a ground attack aircraft, which was the terror of the Wermacht. Heavily armed, it could knock out almost any German tank or make mincemeat of infantry formations. And the game recreates this in minute detail. Trains, tanks, depots... you name it, it's in the game. But don't expect the targets to rollover without a fight. Enemy fighters, anti-aircraft and small arms fire are all there to make life as tough as possible.

But the game isn't all eye candy. The physics are as accurate as you want them to be (so you can start off with easy flight models, then slowly work up to the big league). If that isn't enough, there are 18 different aircraft to fly (although Maddox hopes to have more in place before release in November). As far as flight sims go, this is the closest you'll get to the real thing. What more can you wish for? **PCZ**

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

These days we can always reload a mission if we fail to complete it. But during WWII, pilots didn't have that luxury...

While life as a pilot may have seemed glamorous from the outside, for the guys in the air, life varied from boredom to stark terror. The words of a JUBB pilot on a bombing mission gives some insight into what life was like.

"When I prayed that night, I felt no assurance God was listening. Two of our crew were out of action, and two young recruits no more than 19-years-old, took their place. As we were going to the target, I saw a fighter pass above the gun turret. Before I could react the plane shuddered and a wall of flame swept through the aircraft. One of the bullets must have hit the incendiary bombs, and all I could hear was our captain shouting 'Emergency! Jump!' I swung round, but a wall of fire prevented me getting to the escape hatch. So I did the one thing we are instructed not to do, bail from the turret. The reason is the slipstream is so great you can have your legs cut off leaving the turret. I knew I had no choice, so I prayed 'Oh Lord, please help me' and rolled into a ball, stuck my head out of the turret and was sucked out. Once I was clear, I pulled the ripcord and the silk opened out. I looked down and all I was missing were my boots. I was very badly burnt and I never flew again, however hard I tried to persuade the medics. It broke my heart to see my comrades take off for attacks near Berlin, and quite a few not returning."

So next time you play a realistic sim, remember how lucky you are that there's no chance of having your legs ripped off or your skin burnt, and that you're actually having fun each time you take off rather than crapping your pants with fear at the thought of being blown out of the sky.

It wasn't a game back then.

The visuals are nothing short of breathtaking.

You bombed tha wrong depot. You're all fired.

Three, two, one... lift off
CONQUEST: FRONTIER WARS

Rhianna Pratchett is officially a whacked-out space cadet

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Fever Pitch
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
WEBSITE www.ubisoft.com/conquestfrontierwars
OUT October 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- An engaging sci-fi storyline, with three unique races, merging the likes of *Wing Commander*, *Starcraft* and *Homeworld*
- Multi-level maps with up to 16 areas, connected by wormholes and supply lines
- One of the few games that actually looks better close up
- Up to six fleet admirals to do your dirty work for you

Somewhere, there's a hidden temple where game developers come together to perform secret rites and mumble chants to the gods of gaming. In that temple there's a room that contains a *Wallace & Gromit*-style machine that has buttons marked with all the classic gaming clichés. In the RTS section there's the obligatory three sides (one human, one strong alien, one bizarre alien) combined with the need to harvest (be it crystals/spice/gold). You get the idea.

After waiting their turn, developers shove a few catchy names, some weapons and a shiny box into the machine, press the relevant buttons and, after enduring a few humorous whoops and beeps, out comes a brand new 'old' game. Fever Pitch Studios' 2D/3D *Conquest: Frontier Wars* looks like it's a product of 'the machine'. And it is. But luckily the developers remembered to press the innovation button, which provides the necessary ingredient that sorts the credible from the crap.

BACK FROM THE BRINK

Originally a product of Mr Chris *Wing Commander* Roberts at Digital Anvil, the game was dropped by Microsoft, allegedly because Bill Gates couldn't work out how to play it. Thankfully, after a period of uncertainty, Ubi Soft has stepped in with its bottomless cheque book and saved the game from ignominy.

Initially it was designed along 3D tactical space combat lines, but time has seen it morph into a more traditional RTS. Although it seems to want to pretend to be more of a *Homeworld*, the storyline and layout of the missions belies the pedigree behind it.

Conquest revolves around the battle between three (no big surprise, although there were initially supposed to be four) races, after humans jump through the wrong wormhole and end up in the middle of an intergalactic war. The battlefield is a 2D/faux 3D space landscape, pocked by planets, nebulas, antimatter fields and wormholes. Each feature has its own advantages or disadvantages: flying through a cygnus nebula, for example, will make a ship increase in speed, while an ionic nebula will cause a ship to lose its shields. You don't have to litter space building up factories and the like either. Instead planets need to be captured and secured, and buildings slotted into a doughnut-like ring around them.

First of the three sides are the humans or Terrans, who have a balanced military that requires the presence of all ship types in order to produce a strong fighting force. There's a strong whiff of *Starship Troopers* (the film) to the proceedings, and your briefings are regularly interrupted by TNR (Terran Naval Radio) broadcasts, sponsored by the bizarre superstore Implant Heaven. Which has nothing to do with being stuck between Jordan and Melinda Messenger.

> **66 Challenging elements combat the usual 'program your collector and sit back and make a cuppa' mentality 99**

THE RACE FOR SPACE

The Celareons are the Ordos of the game, with a highly advanced technology that relies on cloaking and surprise attack. They also have the unique ability to be able to build their own wormholes. Last, but not least, is the Mantis, a race of predatory warrior insects who command vast armies of small lethal ships. Aliens don't get great press in gaming, alien insects even less so. OK, so they do a lot of damage and piss people off, but then so do rabbits, but strangely no

"Welcome to Space Station Earth, we hop you enjoy your stay."

Global warming is halted by the use of a gigantic metal doughnut.

Left-click the system map to move your view in the main screen to this area.

"Hi, we're now in town, can we borrow a cup of sugar please?"

sides needs every resource, but each needs one in particular to grow efficiently – Mantis need lots of crew to fly their swarms of starships, Celareons need shedloads of gas to power their technological advancements – so each resource will become an important strategical point.

Perhaps one of the most interesting features of *Conquest: Frontier Wars* (and one that's not really been seen since *Fate Of The Dragon*) is the multi-level map design. A single campaign can have as many as 16 different systems, all connected by wormholes and supply points. Sounds a little too much to handle? Well the game has that covered too, with admirals that come with their own military bonuses that can be assigned to control different fleets, and who will keep things ticking over nicely at home, or provide back-up or diversionary forces when needed. And the developers promise that the AI will not trundle your ships off into a kamikaze mission through your nearest enemy's base, unless you tell them to, of course.

Conquest: Frontier Wars looks like it will have some interesting features, smooth and relatively hassle-free playability and an easy-to-use interface. The multi-level map in particular looks like giving the game and the genre as a whole a much-needed and literal, new dimension. But as soon as someone produces *Killer Bunnies From Outer Space*, I'll be first in the queue. **PCZ**

"I don't think we're going to make it into the sequel Sir."

visionary has ever pictured them flying starships. Rabbits can be terrifying as anyone who has ever seen *Monty Python And The Holy Grail*, or watched *Watership Down* as a child can testify.

MAN YOUR WORMHOLES

The typical gameplay formula of harvest, build and kill, is still firmly entrenched in the game, although Fever Pitch has added some challenging elements to combat the usual 'program your collector and sit back and make a cuppa' mentality. The three main resources (ore, gas and crew) can only be found in certain areas, be it in nebulas, asteroid fields, or on planets. All

Protect your wormholes, you never know when you might need them.

MEDIUM ASTEROID FIELD
A field of medium metallic asteroids and moon dust. Contains medium nuggets of ore for harvesting until supply is depleted. Units slow down while navigating the field.

Corvette
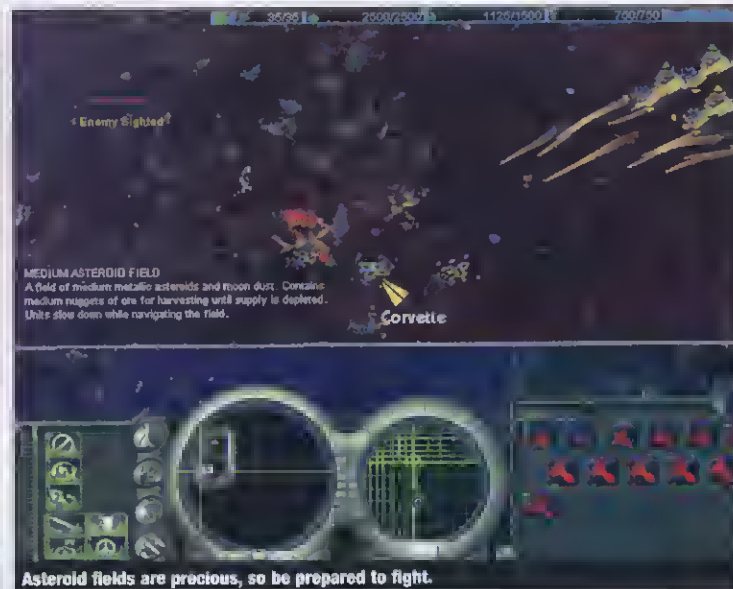
Asteroid fields are precious, so be prepared to fight.

FIFA 2002

EA Sports claims to have reinvented the beautiful game, so we thought we'd better set *Steve Hill* on them

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It is actually different
- No, really
- Seriously
- It is

"Please, I can change. Things will be different this time." Like the plaintive cries of a spurned lover, *FIFA* comes crawling back every year with earnest promises of a fresh start. And the punters fall for it every time, forgivingly clutching the all-new version to their collective bosom. Ultimately though, the claims prove to be hollow platitudes, and while it may occasionally slip on a clean pair of undercrackers, it remains at heart a worthless, idle, slugabed.

IN ON THE ACTION

Having boasted all-new versions for years, and delivered only incremental changes, when EA Sports do actually come to make a tangibly different game, nobody is going to believe them. If ever there was a case of the boy who cries wolf, then this is it.

Bill Harrison is one of *FIFA 2002*'s numerous producers, and he understands our wilfully objectionable stance: "This year

"Gone is the pass-pass-pass-shoot-score gameplay, replaced by a more tactical approach"

we feel a little silly saying 'No, it'll be really, really different (we mean it),' so I get what you're saying about crying wolf.

But I do think that the product speaks for itself."

We've played the 'product' with our own hands, and it's certainly a more pensive affair than in previous years. Gone is the pass-pass-pass-shoot-score gameplay, replaced by a more tactical approach, replete with panned-out camera view. A new passing system is being deployed, enabling you to knock the ball into space, play through balls and one-twos, as well as curve crosses away from the keeper.

ALL IN THE PHYSICS

"What's different and new this year probably comes down to physics," says Bill. "So now you can place the ball anywhere on the pitch, whether it's in the air with a lob, or on the ground through a pass. Anywhere you want, using accuracy with the joystick, power with the pass button, lob button or the shot button, and swerve on the ball. You can also manipulate players to exploit open space. That can either be assisted by the AI in the more junior levels, or as you get more advanced, there'll be manual controls. So you can send who you want, where you want, when you want, and get the ball to them."

Clearly it's about time *FIFA* changed, but why mend what, commercially at least, wasn't broken?

"The focus for the past few years has always been that it's a very pretty game, and that its gameplay is good for the common masses. It's a very approachable game, but for the

hardcore gamer there's not a great amount of depth to the gameplay. What we're trying to do this year is attempt to tackle that head on. It's got a learning curve to it."

An admirable approach, albeit one that could risk alienating the

traditional *FIFA* fan. Predictably, EA Sports isn't about to do that, as Bill explains: "As you and I are standing here now, we're focus-testing back in North America for ways in which we can create a mode that is a little bit more approachable for casual users, and for kids as well."

EA, you're too kind. **PCZ**

FIFA 2002 will feature all-new ball physics.

Players' runs will be displayed, enabling you to play the ball ahead of them.

A panned-out view lets you actually see what's going on.

Through balls will let you carve open the defence.

Caption (top left): You'll be able to pilot an assortment of vehicles.
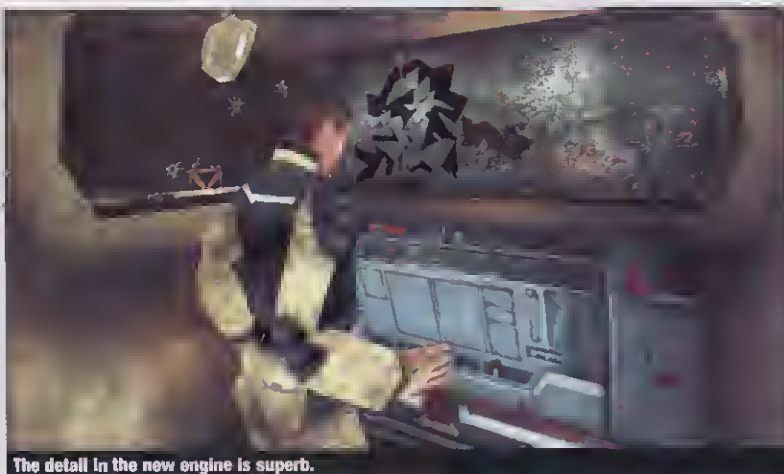
Caption (middle left): The detail in the new engine is superb.

Caption (right): Nope, they're not very clever.

RED FACTION

¹/₄ – that's *Dave Woods*'s idea of a joke

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Volition
PUBLISHER THQ
WEBSITE www.redfaction.com
OUT September

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

● Brand new shooter from the creators of *Descent*
● Geo-Mod technology
● Full editing suite

Medal Of Honor, Return to Castle Wolfenstein and AvP2 might be the year's biggest shooters to come, but there's another single-player game just around the corner that you should keep one eye on. I've talked about *Red Faction* in these hallowed pages before, but with THQ and Volition concentrating on getting the PS2 version out of the door first, the best incarnation of the new game has been conspicuous by its absence over the past few months. That all changed when the latest build arrived on my desk, including the full single-player campaign and 24 multiplayer maps including 18 straight deathmatch and six CTF.

So what's new? The unique selling point is still the Geo-Mod technology, which enables you to blast through most of a level's architecture, but now that we've had the benefit of the PS2 reviews a couple of interesting points have been raised. For a start, despite the existence of the Geo-Mod technology, criticisms have been levelled that the game doesn't make full use of it. In fact, it's only actually necessary to use it in a few sections in the game, which seems like a bit of a waste.

KILL THE GUARDS!

In one level you come across a couple of guards cowering inside a fortified room. Running up you can throw an explosive charge through a gap in the wall, kill the guards and then blow a hole in the wall before getting in and pressing the obligatory switch. This sort of thing is pretty basic when you think about the stuff that was being shown as part of a tech demo last year, with lava flows being diverted and the like. Puzzles built around the Geo-Mod capabilities would have lifted the game above its FPS counterparts, but it looks like Volition isn't going to exploit this fully in its first title.

The multiplayer side of the game is far more open to the possibilities of the new technology. In one of the CTF maps we played, you can blow holes in the opposing fortress, leaving your opponents far more open to attack. Volition has cleverly introduced indestructible meshes into walls, which means you can't blow every last brick away, although you can snipe through the holes with your rifle.

DIY TIME

Better news comes with the fact that the game is going to ship with a full editing suite, RED. Because of the Geo-Mod technology, it might take a bit of time for the mod designers to get up to speed, but it should mean future mods will make more of something that *Red Faction* appears to have sidelined.

Another issue with the game is its AI. Early on in the game, the guards you encounter show about as much intelligence as a paper cup filled with goo. Apparently this is deliberate – the early guards are intentionally stupid to introduce you into the game softly. The fact that they don't appear to get any cleverer later on is a bit more worrying, although this may well change before the game goes gold. As with *No-One Lives Forever*, the guards do show some signs of basic scripting – running away when low on health and the like, but there's nothing that we've seen yet that's on a par with the best games over the past couple of years.

Even if the AI isn't honed to perfection, there's still enough about *Red Faction* to make it stand out.

❝Despite the Geo-Mod technology, criticisms have been levelled that the game doesn't make full use of it❞

editing suite, RED. Because of the Geo-Mod technology, it might take a bit of time for the mod designers to get up to speed, but it should mean future mods will make more of something that *Red Faction* appears to have sidelined.

Another issue with the game is its AI. Early on in the game, the guards you encounter show about as much

Instead of having to trudge through it all on foot, you get to commandeer vehicles, including a submarine and a jeep. The range of weapons is good, and most come with a dual fire mode. The assault rifle, flame-thrower and rocket launcher should ensure your blood lust is sated. Watch out for our review next issue. **PCZ**

PCZONE REVIEWS

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the *ZONE* reviews first – we'll tell you which games you've just got to buy and which to avoid

MISSION STATEMENT

We're on this planet to serve you. You need to know which games are worth buying, which ones are worth considering for a rainy day, and which ones you should point and laugh at on the shelves. For that reason, PC ZONE works a little differently to any other magazine in the UK.

☻ Our reviewers are the most experienced and talented in the business. We're all massive gamers and we don't mince our words. If there are problems in a game, then we'll tell you about them, even if it means falling foul of certain big names in the industry.

☻ What's more, we will only review finished games, which means that any bugs we see within the game will be reported back to you. On occasions we are forced to review from gold masters, but this still means that what we see is what you get in the final boxed product.

☻ Occasionally, this means we can't review the multiplayer side of the game at the same time as the single-player review, as the servers aren't up and running. When this happens, we won't fudge the issue and claim that "multiplayer works well", we'll wait until the servers have been running successfully for a month before running a full second review in our Online section.

☻ We also make sure that we test out the games we review across a variety of different machines and graphics cards. In the office we have access to a whole range of different gaming PCs, from a lowly P233 up to the latest 1GHz behemoth. If we spot differences between the minimum specifications and real-life testing then we'll let you know in the review.

☻ Our scoring system is the most honest in the industry. If a game is average, then we'll give it 50 per cent. If it's not worth knowing then we'll give it the burial it deserves. On the flipside, you won't find many games getting 90 per cent or above, the pre-requisite for our Classic award. Since issue 85 (and the introduction of the new scoring system), we've

only given out eight Classics and this proves that a game has to be pretty special to get the award.

☻ We also make sure that every game is reviewed by an expert in the field, which means that each of our reviews can be placed in context with other games of that genre. You won't see a first-person shooter being reviewed by an RTS fan, and you can be sure that the person reviewing a game has played all the important titles in that particular field.

☻ Every now and again you might disagree with the treatment we've given a game. That's where our Feedback section comes in. This is where you get to have your say in *PC ZONE*, and where your rumblings are answered by the person who wrote the original review in the magazine.

ALL THE LATEST GAMES REVIEWED & RATED

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call:

Acclaim 020 7344 5000 • **Activision** 08705 143525 • **Anco** 01322 292513 • **Blue Byte** (Germany) 49 0 208 450880 • **Codemasters** 01926 814132 • **Cryo** 01926 315552 • **Eidos Interactive** 020 8636 3000 • **Electronic Arts** 01932 450134 • **Empire Interactive** 020 8343 7337 • **Europress** 01825 855000 • **Gremlin Interactive** 0114 263 9900 • **GT Interactive** 020 8222 9700 • **Hasbro Interactive** 020 8569 1234 • **Infogrames** 0161 827 8000 • **Interplay** 020 7551 4222 • **Microids** (France) 00 33 146 01 54 01 • **Microsoft** 0345 002 000 • **Mattel** 01444 246333 • **NovaLogic** 020 7324 8900 • **Rage Software** 0151 237 2200 • **Take 2 Interactive** 01753 854 444 • **THQ** 01483 767656 • **Ubi Soft** 020 8944 9000 • **Zablac** 01626 332233

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100% It a game scores 90 or above, it probably means it's quite good. Classics are games that transcend their parts with the sheer quality of the finished product, creating an experience that will leave an indelible mark on your gaming memory. So, not bad then.

PCZONE CLASSIC

80-89% In this category you'll find great games that just fall short of being truly exceptional. From slightly-flawed genius to a perfectly-executed traditional concept, these might not be true Classics – but they're still worth having.

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

70-79% These scores are not necessarily a condemnation to gaming hell – in fact, we consider any game that falls into this category as worth checking out. Not Classic or excellent, just very good.

50-69% In this range you'll find games that go from the just-above-average to the alright-really-honest. They're usually good fun but have a limited long-term appeal. Read the review and find out if it's really what you're after before you decide to part with your cash.

20-49% These games just manage to keep their heads above the excrement, although a title scoring in the 20s is probably pretty poor. You can find a game that plays reasonably in this category, but you've been warned.

0-19% Some games are born pants and some have pantsness thrust upon them. These games shouldn't have been released. Avoid at all costs.

PCZONE PANTS

MEET THE TEAM

All *PC ZONE*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a fan of the genre

What's the most amount of pain you've ever been in?

DAVE WOODS
GENRE FPS, RPG, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Max Payne* and *Manic Miner*

When I congratulated Martin with a handshake when he got his job here.
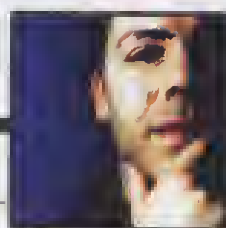
RICHIE SHOEMAKER
GENRE RTS, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *X: Beyond The Frontier*

Watching Live Aid.
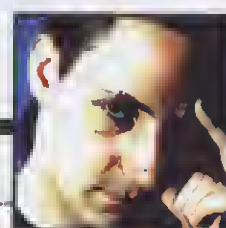
MARTIN KORDA
GENRE Strategy, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *MechCommander 2*

Trying to bench press the equivalent weight of three Daves (approx 32kg).
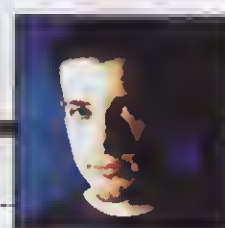
ANTHONY HOLDEN
GENRE FPS, action/adventure, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Project Eden* and *Painkeep Arena*

Running to catch the bus this morning.

DEATH OF THE SUPERTEST

● **REVIEWS EDITOR** Martin Korda

It spans back 33 issues. Throughout its course, it's been the forum for countless topics and dozens of arguments. But now, it is no more. I must regretfully announce to you all, that on the evening of July 11 2001, the regular *PC ZONE* feature known as the Supertest passed away slowly and painfully. Here then, is the tragic tale of its demise.

Each month, it was becoming ever harder to think of new, fresh themes for our discussions. Suggestions began to descend into the realms of absurdity, although a few, such as Richie's idea of doing an adult games Supertest were seriously considered. But the fact that you'd all have been subjected to the horrific sight of a group of fat, balding, sweaty games journos in G-strings, quickly dissuaded us.

Finally we agreed on a theme of a 'Post Pub Game Supertest', which would include the likes of *FIFA* and *Worms*. We'd get a collection of the world's finest critics, then proceed to get incredibly pissed, play all the games and have the most hysterical discussion in Supertest history. Unfortunately, the world's finest critics weren't available, so we invited Dave, Richie, Anthony, me, the Hill (non) brothers and Daniel Emery instead.

Trouble flared up early, during myself and Dave's *FIFA* match. After I'd taken a shock 2-1 half-time lead (while using the most idiotically designed controller in history) it was only a matter of time before things got nasty. After Dave had scored the equaliser, I kicked off by accident (so I claimed). Dave then scored the winner approximately ten seconds after I'd threatened to kill him if he scored from the kick off.

But that was just the start of it. Hill.S lost to Hill.M for the eighth time in succession and proceeded to sulk in the corner for a whole 15 minutes, muttering that he could thrash any of us at *ISS* on the PS2, and that he was ready to put £20 down right there and then to prove it. By the time we reached the talk, we were all so wound up and drunk that sensible discussion was impossible. In fact, Richie was so gone, he started shouting at anyone who spoke, accusing me of not having played a game before 1995, then deciding that I hadn't even been born then, while claiming that when it came to anything, Dave knew, "Nothing." He then proceeded to brag, how way back in 1993, he'd spent an entire night in Sheffield playing *Tanks* and *Wolfenstein 3D*. As it turns out, Richie has never even been to Sheffield.

I won't tell you the rest. It's too horrible. But by the time this farce had come to an end, we all knew that the Supertest had had its day. For now anyway. One day in the not too distant future, it will return, rejuvenated by new ideas and a collection of new games, but until that time, we've decided to do something new. For now it's been replaced by something else (see page 80). Hope you enjoy it.

A CLASS ACT

Certain games deserve to be elevated above and beyond the mass of titles on the shelves. For that reason we've made it hard for a game to receive our coveted Classic award and a score of 90 per cent and above. Each one will have to show originality, take their respective genres to new heights and represent a major step forward in PC gaming. Given this criteria, it would make us look a bit stupid if we awarded two or three every issue, and over the past 16 months since the introduction of our new scoring system we've only given out nine Classics.

This doesn't mean that all games scoring less should be ignored. Rather, the Classic tag points to the games that we can call true masterpieces and benchmark titles. The ones that are going to influence the direction of PC gaming in the near future. And it doesn't stop there. All review scores in our Top 100 are changed over time, to show their standing as and when new titles are released. So, a game that received 90 per cent a year ago, may not still be considered a Classic today. This means that on any given month you can find out exactly what we consider to be the best games in each genre.
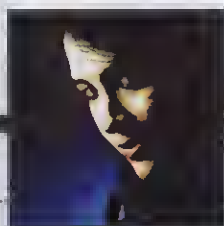
RHIANNA PRATCHETT
GENRE RPG, RTS, adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Diablo II: Lord Of Destruction*

Fracturing my thumb and having it pulled back into place.
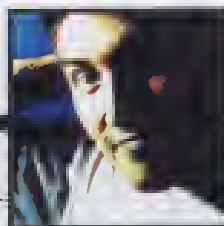
MARK HILL
GENRE Adventure, RPG, FPS, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Champ Manager 01/02* and *Max Payne*

I winced through *Meet The Parents*. It was so unfunny I writhed with pain.
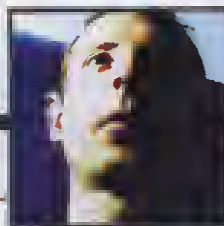
CHRIS ANDERSON
GENRE RPG, adventure, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Jumpgate*

Falling down the stairs of a tube station and injuring my back.
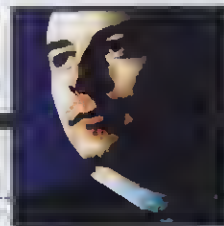
PAUL PRESLEY
GENRE Simulation, action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Operation Flashpoint*

I live every waking moment in more pain than you mortals can imagine.

STEVE HILL
GENRE Management, sport, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Champ Manager 01/02*

When I snapped my arm in about twelve places while playing football.
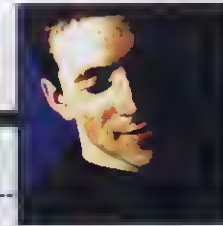
JAMES LYON
GENRE Action and adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Deus Ex*

Getting up before noon.

PROJECT EDEN

✪ Price: TBC • Eidos • September 21

The mutant sci-fi love child of Lara Croft and *The A-Team*? Anthony Holden unravels the genetic code

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

There comes a time in every game player's career when you stop and ask yourself: what drives us all to play these infernal things anyway? What actual pleasures do we obtain from all this monkeying around with keyboards and joysticks, apart from the obvious satisfaction of getting one up on your mate over a quick game of *Quake*? The most popular answer among sanctimonious non-game playing types always used to be that it gave spotty-faced geeks a sense of power unobtainable elsewhere in their pathetic lives, providing their only escape from routine sexual humiliation, bullying and social ostracism. At least, that's what I think they were saying – it was a bit hard to hear with the noise of the toilet flushing around my ears. Well, anyway, now that games are the most popular form of media entertainment ever (or close enough), all those clever theories seem to have gone suspiciously silent… too busy playing *The Sims* are we? It just goes to show there's no simple answer to these questions, though if you find yourself asking them there's probably something wrong with the game you're playing.

Unfortunately, I found myself asking them all too often during the course of *Project Eden*.

Before you get the wrong idea, let me just qualify things by saying that *Project Eden* is a great game. Technically excellent, visually stunning, it features a finely balanced blend of third-person action and atypical puzzling, a raft of innovative weapons and gadgets and an appealing overall design style. But somehow it falls short of its considerable potential. There's just something about it which doesn't quite sit right, a slightly intangible, difficult-to-convey something wrapped up in pacing, reward structure, atmosphere, personality – all the things that come to mind when dealing with the deeper issues of why we enjoy games. It's also the something that has prevented *Project Eden* from being the classic game it could have been.

A TOUGH TIME AHEAD SON

If you've been reading your *ZONES* lately the premise of *Project Eden* should be all too familiar by now, but for those who came in late let's run through it one last time. OK, it's the future and the world is screwed. Everything's gone to crap because all the stupid people wouldn't stop breeding, and now the cities are so damn big and crowded they can't spread out any further. Instead they're going upwards, building endless new layers on top of the old cities until the lower sections are so deep that sunlight never penetrates. Up top law prevails and the rich sip futuristic blue drinks out of test tubes. Down below all you get are roaming gangs of mutants, new-primitives, cannibals and genetic monstrosities with more teeth

Caption: Lara wouldn't have a problem with blocks like this.

> **There's just something about *Project Eden* which doesn't sit right, a slightly intangible, difficult-to-convey something**

than a zipper factory. The status quo is maintained by a heavily armed police group called the UPA – the Urban Protection Agency. They quash any trouble in the lower levels and keep things safe for the ruling elite. For some reason, the four UPA members under your control don't seem to have a problem with that.

So, you've got yourself a crack squad of UPA bully boys – Carter, Andre, Minoko and Amber. At any one time you take control of one member of the team, and switch freely between them like you would weapons in your standard FPS. In fact this analogy has some value in it – since each character corresponds with a unique skill that must be brought to bear to perform specific tasks, they can be thought of simply as a set of tools to be applied as each situation demands. Hot gas or poison fumes to negotiate? Call on Amber, the resilient cyborg. Computer need hacking? Switch to Minoko. Andre is your guy whenever a broken device needs fixing, and boss-man Carter has no real talent apart from a higher security clearance.

When not under your direct control, the other characters are pretty much idiots. They can be commanded to follow you or stay put, and beyond that all they can do is hold down a switch or defend themselves if fired upon. It's all part of a conscious ease of operation that has 'console audience' written all over it, but unfortunately also leaves the characters without much in the way of personality.

The game takes place across 11 expansive levels, each with a set objective. One level has you trying to determine what happened to the technicians in the Real Meat factory, another sees you trying to capture a mutant creature for analysis. As you proceed and unexpected obstacles are thrown in your path, you're assigned secondary objectives by UPA Control, who also send down any special equipment you require via UPA lifts. Each level requires you to solve a number of puzzles to achieve your objective, as well as tackle an increasingly dense assortment of enemies. Many of these appear as normal people or animals before they morph into their mutated, bloodthirsty alter

Caption: It's gonna blow… it's gonna blow. Oh no it's not.
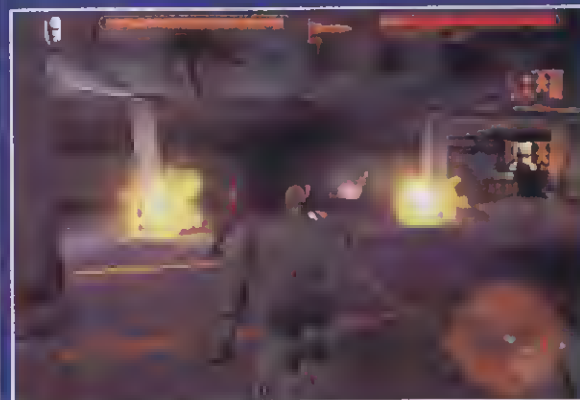
Caption: Try as you might, you can't bring the whole building down on their heads.

"Who turned out the lights?"
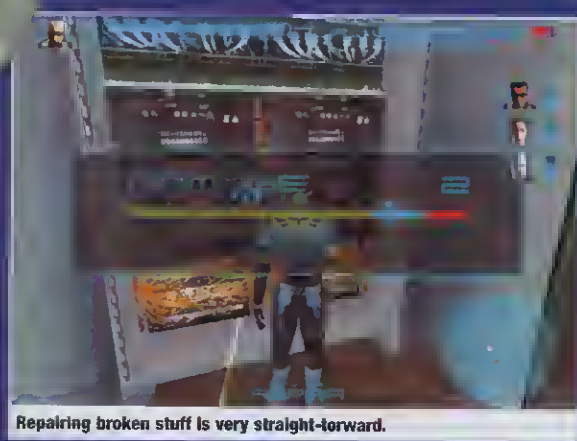
Repairing broken stuff is very straight-forward.

egos. Quite why this is happening is up to you to discover, and needless to say it's not pleasant.

LOOK FAMILIAR?

Before we go any further, let's just get one thing straight. It's impossible not to mention *Tomb Raider* when you're talking about *Project Eden*. Not only because the same team is responsible, but because *Tomb Raider* was the title that popularised the idea of having an idiotic flying cameraman chasing your character around a 3D world in the first place. And in many respects Lara's first outing remains the benchmark for the third-person action genre. OK, so you can switch to first-person in *Project Eden* at the tap of a button, but I can assure you that not many people will use this option as default. The game simply works better in the third-person. Of course there are countless other differences between the two games – where *Tomb Raider* had platforming elements, *Project Eden* doesn't even have a jump function; where Lara was the quintessential solo adventurer, there are four of the buggers in *Project Eden*; where Lara had massive jugs… and so it goes. What I'm trying to say is, despite the many points of departure, I'm not going to tiptoe around the Lara connection just because it's an obvious association. It seems far more worthwhile to explore the comparison in a thorough and shameless manner to see what light it can shed on *Project Eden*.

That said, let's start with this whole third-person thing. Technically, *Project Eden* cannot be faulted. The camera system is one of the best we've seen, coping with tight environments without difficulty, never snagging on environmental objects, zooming in and out without becoming intrusive. This is part of the reason the third-person view, originally written into the game as a tool to help the design process, is the perspective of choice. Occasionally you'll need to switch to first-person when targeting small switches or during combat, but you'll revert just as quickly to chase cam.

However, the thing with third-person action games is that they should be third-person for a

reason; they should take advantage of the benefits offered by the viewpoint. The difference between seeing your character and being your character is significant. Seeing allows you to identify with a character to a far greater extent, and allows them to express far more personality through their movements on screen. Lara would clearly never have become an idol if you couldn't see her; the three characters of *MDK2* would have lost their unique appeal if you couldn't observe their behaviour; *Oni*'s Konoko wouldn't have had the same sexy charm, and so on. Essentially, the third-person perspective opens up the possibility of forming deep character identification and

unspeakable twisted sinewy things. Wandering dogs transform into snapping alien atrocities, all mouth and no skin. It's not particularly pleasant, but *Project Eden*'s success in this regard can also become its weakness.

On the question of atmosphere and immersion, we turn again to *Tomb Raider*. Pivotal to the compelling nature of that game was the immersion in the gameworld and the constant push to discover wondrous new environments. Admittedly it's far more difficult to create that sense of wonder these days, but still… *Project Eden*'s level design is always impressive, yet never truly breathtaking. Its horrific, suspenseful ambience is unrelenting, offering little in the

► It's impossible not to mention *Tomb Raider* when you're talking about *Project Eden*

strongly appealing personalities, and this opportunity has been missed in *Project Eden*. The characters rarely speak outside of cut-scenes, their identical uniforms and moronic behaviour flattens their impact – they are simply not likeable enough. And this is all the more bizarre coming from the creators of one of videogaming's greatest icons.

GROWING AND GLOOM?

One thing that *Project Eden* does do successfully is create a deeply immersive atmosphere. From the first level you are thrown into a richly detailed future nightmare, where skytrains whizz overhead, fires burn unnoticed in abandoned buildings, and deep precipices fall away on all sides. It's totally enveloping, filled with foreboding and fear, and not a little disquieting. As you descend deeper into the city, things get even nastier. Merely impoverished city dwellers are replaced by cannibalistic man-beasts and

way of reward for progress or respite from its dark clutches. With Lara, you would negotiate a series of dark caves and, well, tombs, only to discover an ancient temple, a fantastic waterfall, or some other such delight. There's none of this sense of tension and release in *Eden*'s grisly future shock, and the game becomes less compelling as a result. Play it in short bursts and you probably won't notice, but it's another niggling factor that detracts from *Eden*'s otherwise solid gameplay.

THINGS CAN ONLY?

Hopefully by now you see what I'm getting at. All the elements are there for a fantastic action/adventure outing, and the disappointment arises not because the game is bad – it's acually excellent – but because of some vague feeling not connected with the usual issues of design and execution. There's also been a disappointing lack of progress made in the gameplay since the preview beta code.

⊛ WALKTHROUGH

OUT THE WINDOW

The opening of the fourth level is a classic example of *Project Eden*'s gameplay

1 The level opens in a derelict building. The first step is to clear out any uawanted company.
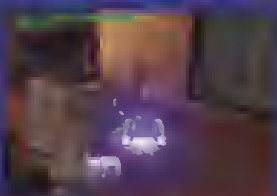
2 To open the door you need to flick a switch in the next room, so spawn a rover on the tabletop.

3 Drive the rover along the ledge to the room next door. Drop in through the wiadow.

4 Flick the switch and revert the now-superfluous rover back to energy.
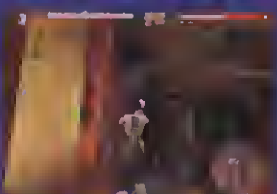
5 Go through the door and up the stairs. Shoot the pulley on the window cleaners' rig to lower it.

6 Go back downstairs and use the newly positioned platform to reach the ground. Simple.

PROJECT FRIEND

The multiplayer side of things

Throughout the development of *Project Eden*, we've been eagerly anticipating the multiplayer possibilities thrown up by the game. A squad of four characters, each with unique talents – the four-player co-operative mode alone promised to be something sweet on the *PC ZONE* LAN. And with relatively slow-moving characters, a unique control system and a range of remote gadgets to employ, it was never going to be your standard deathmatch or squad-based arena play either.

Having played the game both in single-player and co-operatively, our expectations have proved to be slightly optimistic, but not overly so. For starters, the co-operative mode is fantastic – having multiple human-controlled players alters the game radically and alleviates many of the concerns voiced in this review. However, it also has zero replayability. Once you've played the game through in solo mode you're unlikely to want to play the co-operative mode and vice versa. The gameplay is centred around its many puzzles, and once the solutions are revealed, what's the point? Having said that, the full four-player co-operative option is possibly the finest way to enjoy the game on a first run-through. There's also still plenty of potential for multiplayer *Project Eden* online, with CTF, deathmatch and rover-racing options. We'll let you know in *Online Zone* as soon as some servers go live.

Don't just stand there, shoot that inside-out monstrosity.

The enemies employ an excellent variety of attack styles.

Many of the worrying issues discussed in last issue's preview are still prevalent. The lack of athleticism displayed by the characters still grates in many places, like when you fall to your death as a result of not being able to perform a two-foot jump, or when a complicated set of puzzle elements results in a bridge extending across a gap that a one-legged dog could negotiate given the appropriate interface. The enemy AI, while competent, has also failed to live up to its hype, offering an assortment of dull assailants that merely duck and dodge more than usual.

However, improvements have also been made. The way you go about repairing broken switches and mechanical devices is now much more intuitive. The repair screen flashes up and you simply hold down the action button in an attempt to halt a sliding repair pointer at the correct point on a

sliding scale. Miss your mark and you'll either do nothing or make the damage even worse, resulting in a wider target area for your next pass. Once again it's very simple, but as with all of the puzzle elements in the game makes a certain amount of sense.

The emphasis on energy conservation has also been tightened up. The *Eden* team share a collective resource, and provided the team has sufficient remaining energy, killed members are automatically regenerated at the most recent checkpoint. Only if the whole team dies or loses all its energy does the game actually come to an end. It works nicely

> **Too many limitations and elusive flaws prevent this game from being a classic**

and keeps you progressing at a steady rate, with the main punishment for wasting energy being that you'll have to

backtrack through the level to a recharge point.

LOADED QUESTIONS

While we're on a roll, let's dispense with the nit-picking and get back to some of the other things that make *Eden* an excellent and distinctive game. For a start there's the weapons and gadgets. Mobile flycams and robotic rovers, used to scout out inaccessible areas and flick hidden switches, are not only pure fun but offer some welcome variation to the puzzle-solving. The multiplayer rover-racing mini-game is also a nice touch, being great fun and surprisingly quick. There are some truly innovative weapons in your arsenal as well, most notably the Timeshock and Extractor devices. The Timeshock changes the nature of time in a

specific area, slowing down individual enemies or everything within a blast radius, handy for buying time in a heated battle. The extractor draws energy from opponents, simultaneously weakening them and replenishing your own stores.

The nature of the puzzles is also worth mentioning, as they offer both a variety and intricacy rarely seen in an action game. While they inevitably lead to a certain amount of frustration, there is enough of a balance between logic and trial and error to make them generally satisfying. All the other things we've been praising *Project Eden* for in past coverage also remain pleasing. The control system is

unique and manageable, with the over-the-shoulder aiming facility proving indispensable. The storyline is rich and intriguing, and the horrific morphing enemies impressive both technically and aesthetically.

The verdict? *Project Eden* is a solid and hugely entertaining game. However, last issue we said that if it could sort out its manifold niggling problems during testing then it might rise above the pack and become something truly amazing. The bottom line is it hasn't. While

it contains lots of great ideas and has been put together with exceptional expertise, there are simply too many limitations and elusive flaws that prevent it from being a classic along the lines of *Tomb Raider*. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

Minimum Processor PII 300 **Memory** 64Mb **or better** 8Mb 3D card **We played** PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb graphics card

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Varied and interesting puzzles • Morphing enemies • Intriguing storyline • Immersive atmosphere • Excellent gadgets and weapons • Great co-operative mode

DOWNERS Slow-moving and often strangely uncompelling • Overly oppressive ambience • Unremarkable characters • Gameplay can be repetitive occasionally

85 A solid and intelligent nightmare
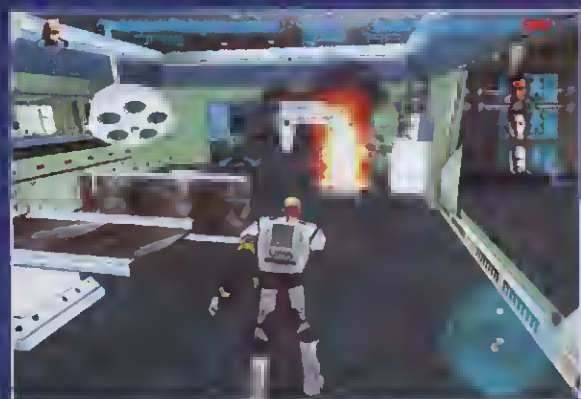
Whaddya mean he's not a mutant? Shoot him just in case.

INPERSPECTIVE

As far as third-person action/ adventures go, *Project Eden* is better than most, though *MDK 2* and *Messiah* are equally innovative.

Project Eden

MDK 2

Messiah

Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation

MAX PAYNE

⊙ £34.99 • Take 2 • Out now

Welcome to the house of Payne. Admission is 35 quid and here to show you around is *Richie Shoemaker*

Games have often been inspired by the film world, and none more so than those of the action genre. Some games are the product of blatant or watered-down licenses (where the developers are creatively tethered by the licence holders), and some games simply wear their influences on their sleeve, with their memorable moments flagrantly scrounged from action films (usually *Aliens*). For every decent film, there are countless games that try to emulate it. Typically linear and focused around a tight story, it's certainly no bad thing they do, despite protests from the likes of us that non-linearity and originality of ideas is the way forward.

Max Payne borrows shamelessly from the clichéd plots of any number of TV movies, most of which even Channel 5 would be embarrassed to air. Max is a New York cop – as most are – on the edge and out for revenge after coming home from a hard day's doughnut consumption to find his wife and daughter murdered by a trio of young scamps, whose minds have been trazzled by the latest designer drug. Max's job then, with you in control of his every move, is to find and bring his own brand of justice to those who are ultimately responsible, plus a few hundred or so that aren't. Been there done that, you might think.

POLICEMAN PLOT

In all honesty, throughout its 20 or so levels, *Max Payne*'s story steals from so many tired movie clichés that it's nigh on impossible to tie it down to a single point of reference. But if we had to choose just one, John Woo's 1993 blood-opera classic *Hard Boiled* would have to be it, aptly, since the man's name and work is mentioned on more than one occasion throughout the game.

In gameplay terms, influences aren't quite so easy to come by – for cinema provides the sole inspiration for *Max Payne*'s being. It may look like it plays like your typical *Tomb Raider* derivative, but the gameplay is closer to a first-person game, in that the aim – aside from advancing the story – is to progress from A to B killing everything that happens to cross your path. Not that *Max* isn't without the odd challenge, but these, in the time-honoured traditions of *Doom*, are little more than button-pushing devices cunningly crafted to pace the game. Occasionally you need to find a character who holds the

Max has just two facial expressions, the one where he's enjoying his own aromas, and this one, where he's just discovered someone else's.

One example of *Max Payne*'s fantastic level design, but be warned, there are a couple of stinkers.

As well es bullets end blood, sparks, splinters and glass fly everywhere.

'If Duke were here, he'd help me out.'

Explosions should always be experienced in slow motion if possible.

keycode to a door (whose virtual life is ended soon after), but for the most part, by heeding the exclamation mark that flashes above your head you'll soon find the big red button that says 'Next level, this way'.

TIME TO KILL

Aside from the odd frustrating moment when even a retread through the current level uncovers no big red button (in which case shooting the old gas canister two rooms back will provide the path forward), Max Payne progresses at a trenetic pace, more so in the third and final act. But it Is Max's innate ability to slow everything down that highlights one of the game's biggest innovations and the one that otters the most obvious clue behind the developer's main influence.

By hitting the default right mouse button the game enters Bullet Time mode, where

"One negative aspect highlighted by Bullet Time, is the scrappy collision detection"

everything – trom the movement of the game characters and even the bullets – progress at a fraction of what we might consider a realistic speed. The only exception to this is the pace at which you can take aim (otherwise of course you would get the same effect playing the game on a Pentium P60). Hence, after a few hours play you'll be able to pick off two or three mooks before they've even had time to realise you are in the room. Early on, however, Bullet Time is more of a hindrance than a help. You'll often dive through a doorway only to empty a clip into the doorframe, or worse, dive headfirst into a wall, which in my case caused much hilarity among those who were watching, all ot whom had better things to do (a cup of tea would

have been nice). Playing in your undercrackers in the confinement of your bedroom, you will of course be tree to learn the art without tear ot ridicule, not that you won't teel a prat diving Matrix-like, guns poised for action, into an empty room.

Certainly one negative aspect ot the game which is highlighted by the Bullet Time mode, is the scrappy collision detection. Time a torward lunge too late and you'll actually pass through your enemy rather than bundle them to the
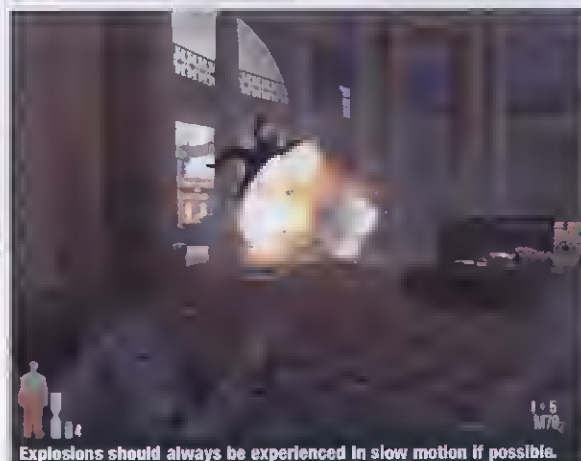
floor. In tight corridors, through which the majority of the game is played, a sideways roll or strafing dive will more often than not see your head and shoulders lodge momentarily in the walls. Having been created by Remedy under the guidance of Duke Nukem creator 3D Realms, these graphical irregularities

are nothing short of scrappy when you consider the fact that in almost every other area Max Payne looks simply stunning.

What makes Bullet Time work so well is that, with just a few keyboard combinations, you can pull off such a wide array of moves. With time slowed down, your eyes have time to appreciate the result of your ➤

Some characters will help you out, but they typically die soon after you meet them. Max consequently has few friends.

Brief cut-scenes sometimes show slow motion deaths of the game's main characters.

EXTENDED REMIX

How to create your own levels for *Max Payne*

Max Payne comes with all the tools necessary to create your own characters, particle effects and levels others can download and play. Of course having dabbled briefly with the software we can comprehensively report that they do indeed work. How they work and what you need to do to create your own mission pack is another matter. *Quake* mappers and mod creators should be in their element, while amateurs might like to get to grips with a crossword-puzzle generator beforehand.

Create your own 3D models.
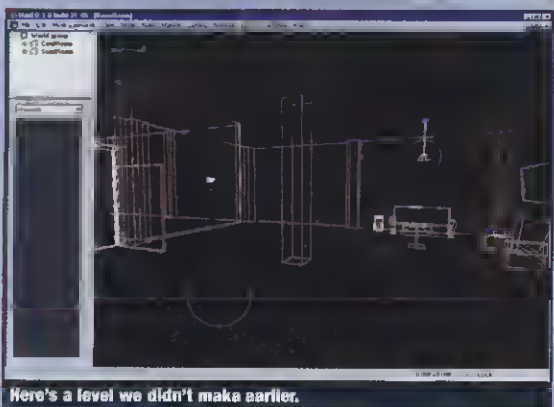
Here's a level we didn't make earlier.
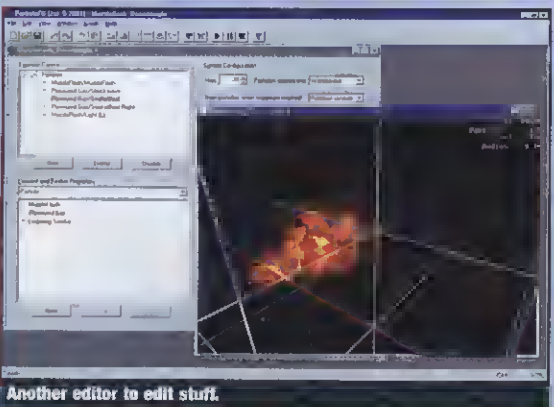
Another editor to edit stuff.

violent actions. In fact, there are few finer sights in gaming today than firing a grenade launcher into a pack of bad guys and watching them launch into the air in slow motion, moments indeed when you wish you could record your actions for the world to see.

BULLET IN THE HEAD

Rather than gratuitous and messy, violence in *Max Payne* is handled in a stylish and – dare I say – artful way. Unlike *Soldier Of Fortune*, or indeed *Kingpin*, enemies never come apart,

3D Realms has left its stamp on many parts of the game. Go up to roulette tables, toilet bowls and Coke machines and you'll see.

The odd 3D-engine cut-scene helps move the story along.

even if a grenade does land at their feet. In this respect, the game characters come across more as actors rather than computer-generated hand-cannon fodder. You don't, for example, see any entry wounds. The blood most certainly flies about, but almost as if each character has sachets of fake blood hidden under their clothes in readiness for their final screen moment. I rather like this approach – it sits well with the theatrical tone of the game. I could however be very wrong;

that the lack of severed limbs is simply down to the constraints of what is otherwise a very capable 3D engine, but by concentrating on how bodies move as a whole rather than in separate parts, due diligence has been paid to the almost faultless character animations and the game experience is all the richer for it. For example, a shotgun slug to the belly will send its victim flying as if punched into a wall, his limbs limply following behind him. Rattle off a couple dozen shots from your dual Ingrams and the ungrateful recipient will rattle as if pissing on to an electrical heater.

Thankfully it isn't just the animations that set *Max Payne* apart. On the fastest machines housing the latest graphics cards, the screen is filled, not only with mists of blood from arcing bodies and flying lead, but wooden splinters from erupting crates, dust clouds from bullets impacting in plaster, shattered glass and even shreds of paper (another Woo trademark). In short, your eyes are drawn, not only to the spectacularly animated death scenes of your enemies, but an

DONE IN 60 SECONDS

After Fugitive, the difficulty setting you start with, two more settings become available: Hard Boiled and New York Minute, where you must complete each level within 60 seconds.
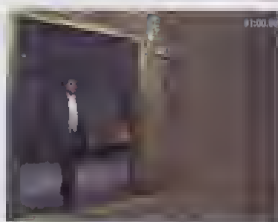
1 Off the train with a full (New York) minute to exit the station.
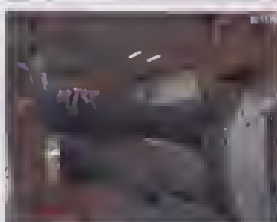
2 No ammo, but this lead pipe should do the trick nicely.

3 That's a few more seconds added on for bad behaviour.
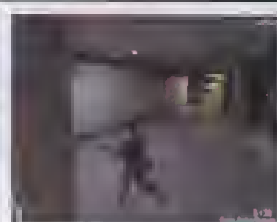
4 Uh-oh! Max's time is running out fast...

'No I haven't got 10p for a cup ot tea. And you can stick The Big Issue up your arso as well.'

WISE GUYS & WISE WORDS

You talkin' to me, You fockin' fock

In terms of sound, Max Payne is a mixed bag. The music is pretty dire, especially at those heart-rending moments when Max loses one of his chums, or if he dies, but the dialogue realty takes the biscuit. Not that we're having a go at the delivery – which is suitably over the top – but the script, which is far from the serious film-noir style we were lead to expect. By design or not, it's so bad it's brilliant. Max obvtously has all the best lines, ridden with poetic nonsense and punctuated with comic book speech bubbles overlaying warped and exaggerated poses, the story, though annoying at first, staris to get to you, so you can't help but be sucked in.

And we thought he only enjoyed looking at the pictures.

Don't go upstairs, Max.

entire composition ot framed devastation and chaos. As I said, quite beautiful, it you have a capable machine.

MAX BRAINS

If only we could lavish as much praise on the AI as we could the graphics. Unfortunately Max Payne isn't as intelligent as he is attractive (as art spookily mirrors lite). While the AI ot the mooks, junkies and mercenaries can't be said to be bad, there is a serious over-reliance on scripting. On reloading a previous save game,

the game rather than how they react, individually or collectively, to your actions. Even across the all-too-few levels set across open car parks or snow-topped roots, enemy characters will either home in towards you or stand stiffly, with the rare occasion that one will roll across the ground in order that they might live tor a couple ot extra seconds.

Perhaps we are being a little harsh on the young fella. After all, Max Payne's intention was never to compete with the level of unrivalled enemy intelligence set
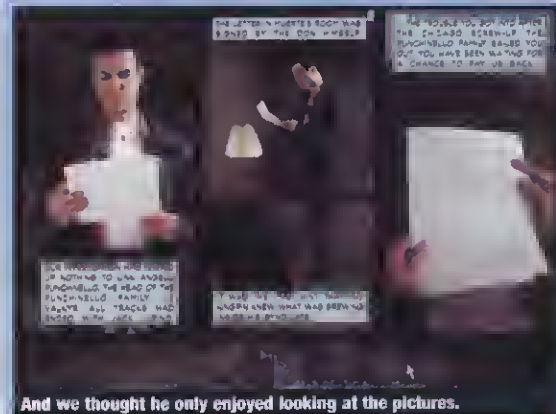
66 Max Payne is a triumph of style over substance, looks above intelligence 99

you'll soon know, tor instance, at what point a grenade is going to be thrown in your general direction, or that perhaps of the three armed enemies around the next bend, one will tentatively come around the corner to see the barrel ot your sawn-off in his face. Even though the game cleverly reacts to how you are playing, it's more the placement of health packs (painkillers) and the accuracy ot your enemy that seems to dictate the difficulty ot

by Half-Life. In actual fact without sounding dismissive, Payne is a triumph of style over substance, looks above intelligence. You play, and your eyes release tears ot sheer joy while your brain disengages tor the tew hours it takes to complete the game.

LIVE FAST, DIE YOUNG

Which is perhaps Max Payne's biggest problem – its length. It begs the question, 'How long does a game have to be before it's

enjoyable?'. The 600 hours required of Baldur's Gate II was enough to put me off and, in all honesty, perhaps Half-Life went on a couple of levels too tar. In Max Payne's detence, for all the corn-ted clichés that pepper its plot, towards the end it picks up to such a crescendo that it leaves other action games wanting. But whereas 14 hours of gameplay may be enough for those who have a slew of multiplayer modes to look forward to, Max Payne has none. Playing through the same levels again at a higher difficulty setting may be enough for the hardcore few, but with the story expired and all surprises exposed, you'll probably find it more entertaining to collect up a batch of your most favourite savegames and play through your most challenging set-pieces again, ot which there should be a tew. Personally, the thought ot having to play through Max Payne's two dream sequence levels is enough for me to shelve the game until new adventures are released by third-party developers.
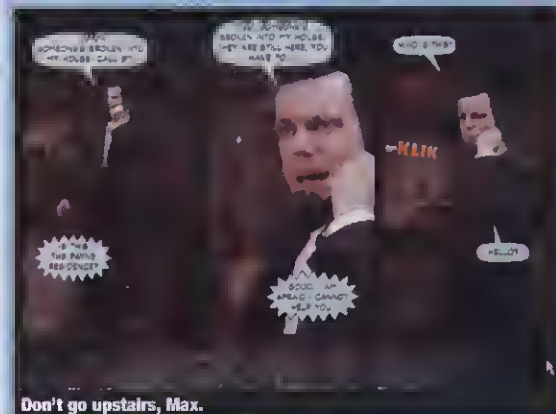
Throughout its all-too-brief stay on your hard drive, Max

Payne is, tor the duration, an entertaining blast. It is proof at long last that a third-person action game can – and does – work, that they can be fun to play rather than frustrating. It also shows that in a genre still trying to live up to a three year old game, you don't necessarily have to Imitate to innovate, or be gratuitous to be violent. Enjoy it while it lasts and when you upgrade your PC, play it all over again, by which time – we hope – we can expect new plots, new levels and eventually a whole new adventure. Max Payne is innovative and highly polished, a game of wild ideas that has been properly tocused to entertain – not to entertain forever, but certainly until the next big thing (probably 3D Realms' own Duke Nukem Forever) comes along. PZ

5 Another kill, but it's not going to be enough...

6 Oear oh dear. Just as we suspected.

INPERSPECTIVE

Bloody and violent, Kingpin is looking old, but Hitman is an underated alternative to Max Payne, it even has a slow motion option.

Max Payne

Hitman: Codename 47

Kingpin

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor 450MHz **Memory** 96Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 16Mb D3D-compatible 3D card **WE SAY** Aim for a 733MHz processor with 128Mb RAM, but you'll need a 3D card with loads of memory (32Mb at least) to get the game looking anywhere near its best

PCZVERDICT

🔼 **UPPERS** Character animation • Bullet Time mode • Cinematic • New levels shouldn't be too long in coming

🔽 **OOWNERS** Brainless • Clichéd • Too short • No multiplayer • You'll probably need to upgrade your PC

90 The most cinematic, innovative and stylish game in years

FLY! II

⭐ £29.99 • Take 2 Interactive • Out now

Ladies and gentlemen, this is Captain *Paul Presley* speaking. Please return your seats to the upright position, place your heads between your knees and pray

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

The highly detailed panels are the stars of the show.

A quick recap for those that haven't been paying attention. In the world of civil flight sims, Microsoft's *Flight Sim 2000* is the top dog. Love it or hate it (and there are many, many reasons to do the latter), there is just so much extraneous support in the form of scenery, aircraft, missions and editing software that nothing can compete. Despite

head on with Microsoft's global sim, and despite being far more attractive to use and containing some of the best cockpits the genre has ever seen, a lack of decent scenery and support that came too little, too late, meant it just couldn't compete.

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

So here's *Fly! II*, still giving Word's auto-correct feature a headache and still trying to go head on with Microsoft. First up you need to know that this isn't the bugged and incomplete American release. We get a fully
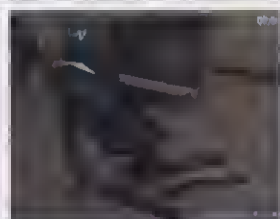
> **"Heathrow Airport appears to be nothing but fields and London doesn't even have a River Thames"**

that, Looking Glass's *Flight Unlimited* series was far better at creating believable worlds to fly around in, even if those worlds were limited to areas the size of your back garden (*You mean San Francisco and Seattle – Legal Ed.*) and consequently garnered the 'fun' vote. And then there was *Fly!* Aside from creating punctuation nightmares for sub-editors the world over, *Fly!* attempted to go

patched-up effort, with plenty of added scenery packs and planes and much more stable code.

Basically, all that really matters is that it's essentially the same game as the first one, but looking nicer and slightly more polished. The new scenery is better, but if you stray outside the included areas you'll still be in generic hell. To be fair, the generic scenery does look a lot nicer now, but there are still plenty of mistakes (Heathrow Airport appears to be nothing but fields and London doesn't even have a River Thames

anymore – that's global warming for you).

That said, it does fly extremely well. You will need a massive machine to get anything like a decent frame-rate (see Tech Specs for details), but there's plenty to enjoy. Navigation is still superb, with fully modelled GPS systems shining like beacons in the night. Weather is top rate with superb cloud and lightning effects. The planes provide plenty of variety (especially the new helicopters) and the cockpits are the best in the business, with every switch modelled and working – right down to fasten-seat-belts lights and cigarette lighters.

Better still are the inclusion of scenery, airport and mission editors, all of which let you add accurate detail to those areas Terminal Reality (the game's developer) has skimped on.

FLY!, FLY! AGAIN (SORRY)

Aside from the generic scenery, the only thing working against *Fly! II* is the fact that it isn't from Microsoft. Terminal Reality needs to really push the third-party support and create a thriving community around *Fly! II* as on the base level it's far more enjoyable to play than *Flight Sim 2000*. And that's that. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 333 **Memory** 64Mb RAM, 1.3Gb hard drive space **ALSO REQUIRES** 16Mb 3D card (non-Voodoo 3 cards only) **WE SAY** If you want anything that looks good we're talking top-of-the-range Athlons (1Ghz minimum), GeForce graphic cards and lots of hard drive space (4Gb at least). Plus get the latest patch (No. 4) from the Web

IN PERSPECTIVE

Microsoft is still king of the roost thanks to the massive amount of support provided by third-party sources. *Flight Unlimited* is starting to look dated now but still reigns supreme, albeit in very limited areas. *Fly! II* is a strong product, but needs to be well supported to really shine through.

Fly! II

Microsoft Flight Sim 2000

Flight Unlimited II

Cityscapes are as poor as ever.

PCZ VERDICT

🔼 **UPPERS** Cockpits have more knobs than a society ball • Lovely weather effects • Excellent navigational aids • Good editing system • Generally good flying

🔽 **DOWNERS** Sparse, generic scenery • Not good for long-haul flights • Doesn't have the third-party support of Microsoft (yet) • On-screen manuals

80 Excellent, though needs support to compete with Microsoft

CODENAME OUTBREAK

⊕ £34.99 • Virgin Interactive • Out October

How many mind-controlling alien parasites does it take to cause an outbreak? *Martin Korda* **thinks it's about four**

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

I t's 2012 and an unidentified object has crashed in a forest in Montana. A unit of highly trained marines is sent to investigate. None of them return. Which can only mean one of two things...

1) They've realised the futility of war, started a naturist's commune and discovered the joys of brotherly love, casting away their cammo gear and tossing their weapons into the undergrowth, preferring to spend their days singing songs about trees while running around in their underpants and having casual sex with badgers.

2) They've all been killed.

So how does this endeavour end, I hear you ask? Are you sitting comfortably? No? Well stop bloody well slouching then.

HAVEN'T I SEEN YOU SOMEWHERE BEFORE?

When it comes to being unoriginal, *Codename Outbreak's* opening sequence has to be up there with the best of them. Dense forest. A platoon of soldiers. An unseen enemy. The platoon is attacked by alien parasites. Parasites take over soldiers' brains. Soldiers turn on their comrades. Panic. Uninfected soldiers fire randomly into undergrowth without actually hitting anything. Shouting. Running away. Swearing. Cut to unseen enemy tracking two terrified soldiers from the tops of trees with thermal imaging. Soldier falls over theatrically as bullets scythe through his back, more panicked random firing into undergrowth, more swearing. Bit more swearing for good measure, feeble attempt to save dying comrade by stupidly cradling his head, followed by more random firing. Enemy now visible. Too late. Now the other one's dead too...

BLAZE OF GLORY

So not the most auspicious of starts then. And the bad news is that things get worse before they get better for this 3D action/strategy shooter from Game World GSC (the developers of the excellent *Cossacks*). The good news though, is that when things do start to heat up, you'll feel as though you've been hooked up to an intravenous drip of adrenaline, strapped into your seat and had your hand superglued to your mouse, freed only when the end sequence has faded to a memory. Mixing elements from *Delta Force*, *Operation Flashpoint* and *Aliens Vs Predator*, *Codename Outbreak* proves to be a truly enthralling

You only get one weapon, but it has many different functions.

PATIENCE

The first few hours are far from impressive. Textures are poor and early missions are monumentally dull, with some ridiculously easy missions throwing up a set of patronising and uninteresting

> **"You'll feel as though you've been hooked up to an intravenous drip of adrenaline and had your hand superglued to your mouse"**

and open-ended game, let down only by a motley assortment of sloppy shortcomings, some unrealised potential and a storyline more unoriginal than a romantic comedy.

tasks, which wouldn't challenge a run-over Shitzu. But then, just as you're about to give up on the whole thing, the game is suddenly transformed by a series of enthralling and brain-teasing missions, which require as much in the stealth and planning department as they do in the physical violence one. The plot starts to intensify, and you begin to realise just how much of a threat the alien parasites pose to

humanity. Having taken over several key military locations by implanting themselves into soldiers' brains, the world's safety lies in your hands. Every mission becomes full of suspense and brilliantly implemented ideas. Take for example the one where you have to stop four nuclear missiles from being fired off by the alien invaders...

OPERATION STOP THOSE ALIEN MISSILES

Firstly, you have to configure your team, choosing two soldiers, from a selection of ten specialists, ranging from marines, to snipers and demolitions experts. Then you must equip yourself and your AI-controlled sidekick, with the best type of hardware for the given mission. This includes armour and ammunition, but no guns, as you only have one to choose from, a swivelly-type multi-purpose

HEALTH 100%
Stealth is every bit as important as brute force.

Is it just me or is that tree firing at us?

HEALTH 100
ARMOR 100%   .SNIPER ---- .05.

Looks like he's heading for disaster.

all-in-one weapon with nine different functions, ranging from a machine gun to a rocket launcher. Well what did you expect? This is the future don't you know. Separate guns? How quaint. Anyhow, after a quick briefing, it's time to get to work.

A DAY IN THE LIFE...

Standing waist-deep in a river, the only way forward is down. Before long, you've come to a set of tunnels. Dew drops fall from the ceiling into puddles, their sound reverberating around the maze of passages with an eerie echo. *Ooooo000h.* Switching to night vision you and your team-mate soon find the entrance to a large darkened room. Steam from burst pipes rises and floats hauntingly across the room.

You move slowly, but the splash of water alerts the guards patrolling above. A firefight ensues, and you battle for survival as the enemy uses their height advantage to keep you pinned down. While you're preoccupied, an alien parasite creeps up behind. You swivel round, pulse racing, and saw it in half with a machine-gun burst, as in the distance, echoing voices of enemy reinforcements grow ever closer. Climbing up to ground

INPERSPECTIVE

Project IGI is probably the nearest comparison to *Codename Outbreak*, and in terms of polish and sheer scope of gameplay, is slightly superior. There are also many similarities to the shock tactics and intense firefights of *AvP*, but if this is what you're looking for, then you'll probably be better off waiting a couple of months until the impressive-looking sequel hits the shelves. For those of you who prefer a more hardcore sim, *Operation Flashpoint* is your best bet.

Codename Outbreak

Project IGI

Operation Flashpoint

AvP

Delta Force: Land Warrior

stumbling across an alien egg, which bursts open, spewing forth its hideous contents like an acne-covered face trapped in a vice, and sending you reeling back, gun kicking manically in your hands as you target the importance of burst fire. By the time you reach the missile complex, you're too

66 Dew drops fall from the ceiling into puddles, reverberating with an eerie echo 99

level, you order your team-mate to cover you as you scout ahead, but turning the corner, you're spotted by a solitary guard. He runs away. But instead of being a cowardly nonce, he's actually circled round you and attacked unexpectedly from behind, strafing as you both try to pick him off. The bastard.

You're bleeding, your buddy's injured too, and you're faced with one of three routes to reach the rocket. Making your choice, you enter a darkened passage,

late. A mad rush ensues to find the self-destruct computer. But before you can find it, you'll have to go through hell all over again...

THE GOOD THE BAD AND THE UNORIGINAL

Although *Codename Outbreak* is flawed in several departments, such as its lack of originality (many elements are borrowed from famous action films – see the Spot The Difference Panel), quirky physics (sometimes you can't shoot through a tent for

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

#### Pure coincidence or a total rip-off? You decide

Some of the ideas in *Codename Outbreak* are somewhat lacking in the originality department. In fact, rarely has a game been quite so transparent when it comes to showing off its influences. Here are a few of the most obvious ones...


During the hectic intro sequence we see a well-muscled machine gun-wielding marine with a square jaw and very little acting ability, firing randomly into the woods, trying to hit an unseen alien. Which isn't too dissimilar to...
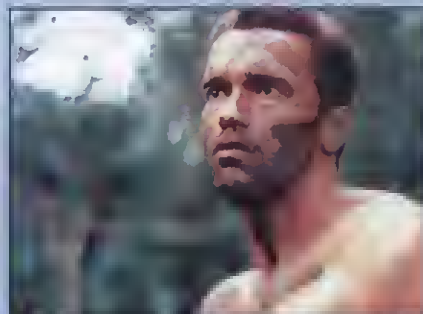

...Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Predator*. Several times during the film we see this well-muscled machine gun-wielding marine with a square jaw and very little acting ability, firing randomly into the woods, trying to hit an unseen alien.
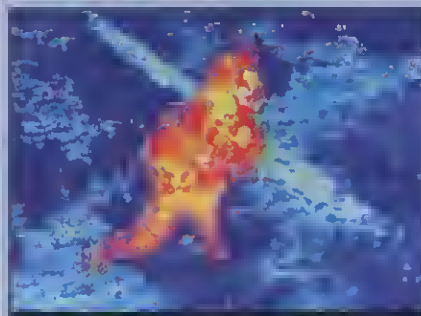
During the same intro in *Codename Outbreak*, you watch as an unseen enemy tracks panicked marines with thermal imaging. Which bares an uncanny resemblance to...
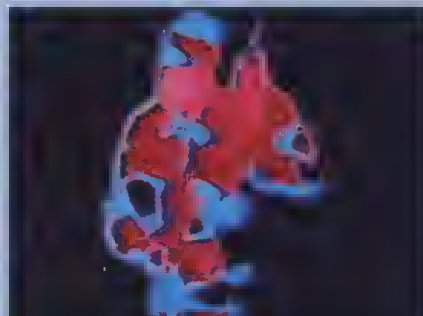
The Predator in er, *Predator*, who watches its prey from the trees with its – yes you've guessed it – thermal imaging. Hmmm.
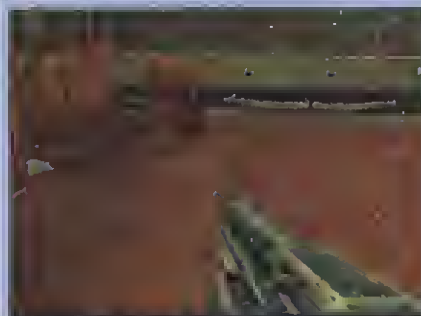
And to finish it off, the large eggs from which the alien parasites (which attach themselves onto people's heads) hatch from, look almost identical to the ones in...

The face-hugger eggs from *Aliens*, from which alien parasites hatch. Now I don't know about you, but I think something suspicious is going on. Then again I might just be paranoid... Did anyone else just hear that?

example), the inability to drive vehicles and some pretty dated graphics, in many respects it's a real gem. It melds the fear and suspense of *AvP* with the slow-paced and strategic gameplay of *Delta Force* and adds the extra twist of an AI-controlled ally, who fights by your side and follows your instructions with (for the most part) genuine intelligence. There's also the added bonus of each level being hugely open-ended, meaning you can play through the game several times without it getting too repetitive.

It's no classic, but it more than deserves your attention and for its troubles can rightly claim a deserved Award For Excellence. Well done, gold star, rapturous applause. Next time though Game World GSC, try to come up with an original storyline. OK?

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 266 **Memory** 128Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb 3D card **WE SAY** A PII 266? You're having a laugh. Try a PIII 450 with a 16Mb 3D card to get the most out of this one

PCZVERDICT

⊕ UPPERS Later missions superbly atmospheric • Intelligent AI-controlled sidekick • Plenty of mission variation • Brilliantly paced • Open-ended missions • Genuinely scary in places

⊖ DOWNERS Poor graphics • Takes a while to get going • Unoriginal storyline • Can't drive vehicles

80 Unoriginally excellent

MECHCOMMANDER 2

⭐ £29.99 • Microsoft • Out now

Will this be the Mechxt big thing? *Martin Korda* **clears his desk**

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

What's the first thing that comes into your head when you think of the term Robot Wars? Go on, be honest, it's that wannabe-wacky BBC2 early evening show you used to watch (and maybe still do), with its cheeky-chappy has-been scouse presenter, isn't it? And somewhere deep within you there's still that distant hankering you had all those years ago of being huddled up in a sweaty and dimly lit garage with your bearded father and his collection of geeky mates, building your own robot out ot a biscuit tin, four yoghurt carton lids and a wind-up clock, looking over the plans ot a machine that looked like a 1970s vacuum cleaner. Isn't there? Isn't there?! Hmm? Hmmmm? Ha, I knew you'd crack in the end.

However, there came a time when we all realised just how unsatisfying the whole show was. Nothing ever really got destroyed did it, not even by that big house robot that looked like a giant aardvark? The best we could ever expect was a scratched aerial and the odd puncture. And when you think back, it's hardly surprising. After all, there's only so much

damage two metal machines the size of your average lawn mower, powered by blender motors and sporting weaponry like drawing pin bumpers and pneumatic bicycle pump-powered hammers can do to each other. Which is probably why just about every robot from the second series looked like a doorstop on wheels. Oh look, it's tipped the opposition robot again. Quick turn over, I think *Gardener's World* is on.

A TALE OF THREE HOUSES

Apparently though, robot wars of the future will be tar more violent and exotic affairs, it we're to believe Microsoft's latest RTS offering, *MechCommander 2*. Set In a tar-off part ot space called the Inner Sphere, three rival corporations are locked in conflict in an effort to stake their claims to the territory. As a mercenary, In charge ot a small group of skilled and well-armed mech-driving soldiers, you must help your employers achieve their goals by blowing up anything that stands in their way. If you successfully complete your tasks you're rewarded with credits and new equipment to improve your outfit with. It's a common tale really.

The teel and look of *MechCommander 2* is similar to the *C&C* series, as each mission is preceded by an FMV brieting, but the small number ot units available to you (16 max) makes the gameplay far more similar to the likes of *Ground Control*. Which

> You've all been gathered here to be punished for having the most stupid collection of names In history.

Deployment Team
Select a unit to command or review its info. Hold down SHIFT to select multiple units.

FLASH   HAMMER   HACKSAW   LONGSHOT

ot course means brute torce is out and tactics are in. And that means you have to think. Yes, think. Novel I know.

A NEW DIMENSION

Unlike its predecessor, *MechCommander 2* is fully 3D, with a 360-degree rotatable camera and a versatile zoom function, which allows you to survey your surroundings trom just about any angle or trajectory. It's nearly impossible to become disorientated when you swing the camera around – unless you're the kind of person who regularly gets lost In their own

house – as a handy and discreet compass always allows you to keep track of your bearings no matter which way you're facing. Each mech is superbly drawn and animated, and if anything, the closer you zoom in on the action, the more impressive everything looks.

⭐ **WALKTHROUGH**

WALKING WITH ROBOTS

Take a stroll through a typical day as a MechCommander, as we uncover some secret tactics to help you crack mission two

1 After modifying your team and making sure that you've got a good balance between long-range and short-range mechs, head immediately north and capture the resource building. You'll need the credits It provides later on es you only have four mechs to play with on this level.

2 Because there's no formations option you must make sure you only move your mechs a short distance at e time, In order to keep them in a group. Staying out of range of any enemies, head east and eliminate the look-out tower you find there. After this, destroy the sensor tower to the southwest.

3 Keeping your short-range mechs af the back, move your long-range mechs to the head of the group and select the 'Fire From Current Position' option. Order them to fire at the turrets, edging them forward If they ere out of range. Take out the front line and then capture the turret control building.
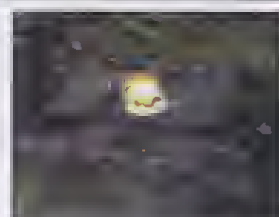
4 Move your troops eround the map In e clockwise direction. It's important to make the enemy es blind as possible, so take out or capture the sensor towers and stay out of range of any turrets. Enemies are few and far between and usually travel In twos. You'll make short work of them as you go.

If was like that when we found it. Honest.

Than annual robot tug-of-war contest was moved by controversy after one of the contestants was shot.

BREAKING FROM THE NORM

You may have noticed that most new RTS games don't have resource management anymore. Which means no more hours of mining, building storage facilities, creating massive armies and then charging the enemy in the hope you've got more units than them, only to fail to get past their front gates and then spending another three hours doing it all over again. If this image brings back horrific memories of futile all-night *C&C* sessions, then you'll probably be quite relieved to hear that *MechCommander 2* has moved away from this laborious process, replacing it with a far more entertaining and rewarding system. And here's how it works…

TELL ME HOW IT WORKS MARTIN, OH OK…

You begin with four mechs and a collection of pilots with various skills. Although they look like a collection of middle-aged fishermen, concentration camp victims and games developers (funny that), the fact that each one has a face and personality, actually makes you care about them. Perhaps not to the point where you're prepared to listen to

END

IN PERSPECTIVE

MechCommander 2's small groups of units and the lack of any real resource management, makes it more like *Ground Control* than *Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2*. However, the storyline and the general feel of the game are far more similar to the latter. If you're into your 3D futuristic RTS games, then either *GC* or *Z: Steel Soldiers* are slightly superior games, but *MechCommander 2* is no slouch and is well worth your time and effort, whether you're big on robots or not.

MechCommander 2

Z: Steel Soldiers

Ground Control

Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2

5 Once you've circumnavigated the map, return to the Gemini South base and call in a repair vehicle to fix damaged units. You can pretty much waltz into the base as you look care of the turrets earlier. After you've eliminated the weak resistance you'll be given new objectives.

6 This is the big one: time to take out Gemini North. However, it's quite simple with a little bit of thought. Hang back from the entrance and draw out all of the vehicles protecting the base. Without the cover from their turrets (which are out of range), they're easily despatched.

7 All of those turrets will cause you problems if you attack them head on, so the simple solution here is to call in a couple of air strikes on the Turret Control centre. With the base's defences out of commission you can once again stroll in and overpower what's left of the enemy resistance.

8 Without the loss of a single unit and without too much cost to you, you've wiped out an entire map of enemies. It just goes to show the importance of tactics in *MC2*. Oh yeah, nearly forgot. To complete this mission, capture the Headquarters and sit back and enjoy the plaudits.
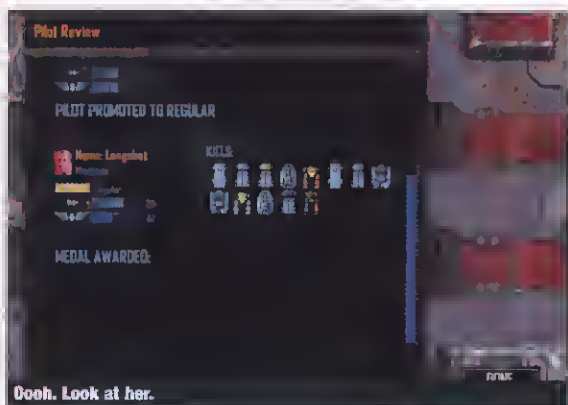
Oooh. Look at her.

"That's right, pick on me you bastards."

their personal problems, but the fact that they can each gain experience and new skills (which you can choose from an extensive list of piloting and gunnery abilities), means that you can customise your team in just about any way you want.

So if you prefer to have a small group of elite pilots, backed up by

The problem with this though, is that the better you are at the game, the easier it gets. So by the time you get to the later missions your forces are so powerful that things start to be a little too easy, although this is countered somewhat by a limit on the amount of mechs you can take into combat.

"If you're a hardcore RTS fan, some missions will probably pose about as much of a challenge as having a fight with your gran"

a bunch of idiots who flinch every time they fire a gun, then that's up to you. Of course you can just as easily build up a well-balanced force of semi-competent pilots. Before each mission you have the chance to arm each mech with an impressive array of lasers, machine guns, armour and engines, depending on what you think you'll need for each mission.

COUNT YOUR LOSSES
But it doesn't stop there. If you lose any mechs or drivers then you have no choice but to blood some new ones. Only problem is, there's a limited amount of both. Your arsenal, funds and team are transferred from one mission to the next, so it's just as well that you can salvage both your own and enemy mechs from the battlefield if you've got enough money. You can also buy new ones.

If you're a hardcore RTS fan, some of the missions will probably pose about as much of a challenge as having a fight with your gran, but this doesn't stop it

being a superb strategy game full of action and intrigue, with enough plot twists to keep you captivated till the end. If you're an RTS vet, you'll probably find that once you've worked out how to use the terrain to your advantage, most of the earlier and some of the later missions turn out to be little more than a formality. Fortunately they're still highly entertaining, as you're always worried about preserving your prized and limited supply of warriors. Battles are a joy to watch, with lasers and missiles connecting with satisfying brutality, while explosions light up your face with sadistic pleasure as you watch your units prance around the screen using evasive manoeuvres to avoid enemy fire.

That is, so long as they're not your units that are being fried, an all-too-common occurrence due to a lack of a formations option. This inevitably causes your mechs to get split up and isolated, and along with some suspect pathfinding, is the game's major weakness.

MECHING A DECISION
MechCommander 2 is undoubtedly one of the best RTS games of the year, with some of the most entertaining multiplayer RTS action I've seen for a while and an incredibly easy-to-use mission editor prolonging the carnage. Its collection of well thought-out missions, hugely customisable units and slick presentation propel it well ahead

of the likes of C&C: Red Alert 2, and the atmosphere generated by a pounding soundtrack and sound effects so real you'd think someone's bored holes in your head and put an Uzi in your skull, will leave you with a real sense of satisfaction. A little too easy it may be, but it beats watching radio-controlled shoeboxes gently shunt each other into pits on TV. This is robot wars how it should be, and there's not even a whiff of a wizened middle-aged man with an unhealthy interest in amateur robotics to be seen. And that can only be a good thing. PCZ

Extreme measures were taken to end the truckers' strike.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Tactics needed over brute force • Well-scripted and acted storyline • Great graphics, even up close • Slick presentation • Hugely customisable units • Great multiplayer options • Easy-to-use mission editor

DOWNERS Too easy for RTS vets • No formations option • Occasionally dodgy pathfinding • Overly long loading times

84 A fun version of Robot Wars

"Philip? Philip? Is that you? What are you doing hiding over there?"

MYSTERY OF THE DRUIDS

⭐ £29.99 • CDV • Out mid-September
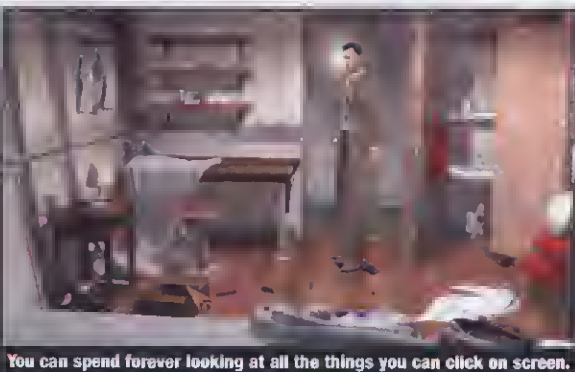
We're not exactly giving the game away by saying you eventually travel to the past. After all, CD1 is called The Present and CD2 The Past – which is a pretty big hint.

You can spend forever looking at all the things you can click on screen.

I know, Officer. I can imagine a better sight as well. Has the forensic squad already been here?

A bobby. This must be London, England then.

Point. Click. There isn't an adventure game *Mark Hill* hasn't cracked. Aren't those Internet walkthrough sites great?

We've come across a number of stupid names in our time, but few are certain to turn off the British gaming public more than *Mystery of the Druids*. They may be a fascinating subject, but druids are forever associated with Spinal Tap jokes and the more beardy end of role-playing games. The mere mention of the word 'druid' will get you laughed out most pubs, and possibly even beaten up. Which is a real shame, because this is one of the best old-style point-and-click adventures we've seen for ages. And despite having a title that is impossible to take remotely seriously, it's probably the best non-humorous example of the genre.

THESE AREN'T THE DRUIDS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

I've always said adventure games are only good if they're funny, but German developer House Of Tales seems to have other ideas. While its closest gaming relatives are *Broken Sword* and the *Blade Runner* game, Druids is far superior to both.

As the New Scotland Yard murder detective Brent Halligan (sounds more like an American porn star than an English policeman), you are given the task of investigating The Skeleton Murders. All that has been found of the victims is – you guessed it – their bones, dumped in forests by what turn out to be modern-day druids, hellbent on completing some sinister ritual to enslave mankind. It's a case

that leads you on a quest through England, France and, eventually, to the past.

All the usual police detective elements are here, from the unnecessarily irate chief ot police who can only communicate via shouts, to the department colleagues who don't really like you that much. Poor Brent is considered to be an incompetent tool, but luckily tor him Scotland Yard only seem to have two murder detectives on their books.

Unlike so many other adventure games, *Druids* steers away from the well-trudged film noir style and themes and instead opts tor well-lit areas and situations closer to *A Touch Of Frost* than *The Maltese Falcon*.

Like all the best cops though, your methods will have to be a bit unorthodox: how about drugging a homeless man so you can steal his meagre alms so you can make

> **"The openness of the gameplay makes getting past certain points almost impossible without some external help"**

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you want a funny adventure game, both *Discworld Noir* and *Grim Fandango* are out on budget. As far as we're concerned, *Druids* is the only serious game worth playing but *Broken Sword* does have a large following.

Mystery Of The Druids

Escape From Monkey Island

Broken Sword 2

Discworld Noir

Grim Fandango

⭐ WALKTHROUGH

DRUID HUNT

Getting started couldn't be simpler

Ahhh, If only all the puzzles were as simple as this… it would be a pretty boring game. Anyway, this is how the game begins.

☐ Listen to the chief's tirade and get as much into as you can. He'll give you the case file.

Ha, you don't find druids so funny now, do you? And the victim is still alive, you know.

The music in *Druids* is mostly the kind they play on aeroplanes during take-off.

There are some nice realistic touches, like a BT phonabox or this beggar with a Woolworths bag.

English In Only Ten Days language courses for foreigners. But despite being a serious game, it's not entirely up its own arse (unlike other titles I could mention) and there are enough light-hearted moments to stop it from falling flat on its face.

The gameplay is made more varied by the fact that you actually get to control another character later on, a female anthropologist. But don't go confusing this with a *Resident Evil* or *Alone In The Dark* type of adventure – this is far more difficult.

PARANOID DRUID

This is by no means an easy game, and I'd advise beginners to stay away. You have the freedom to go where you want and are not nudged constantly in a certain direction. So while all the puzzles are quite logical, the openness of the gameplay makes getting past certain points almost impossible without some external help.

You will spend ages trying every object in your inventory with every object in the scenery only to realise three weeks later that you missed some small detail. But getting stuck is part of the joy of adventure games, and at least the puzzles don't rely on some warped internal logic.

But there are a few problems which make matters even more

difficult. It's not always clear which things can be picked up and which just looked at. There's loads of stuff lying around and it's all too easy to miss a vital object. There are different zoom levels in certain areas; whenever you see a magnifying glass you can take a closer look. But even if you can see a particular object at one zoom level, the mechanics of the game may require you to only use or pick it up at a different, predetermined viewing level.

Each dialogue tree is non-linear and has plenty of choices. But this means it's possible to finish talking to someone, thinking you've exhausted all the possibilities, and only find out later that choosing one question and not another meant that you missed out on the most important clues. You end up having the same conversations three or four times to make sure you've got all the information you need.

The game seems to be divided into two parts (not necessarily coinciding with the Past and Present). It gets much more sinister later on, switching from a mild episode of *Jonathan Creek* to the last half hour of *Hannibal*. You witness some gruesome scenes and the puzzles become even harder. One of them can even end in the death of one the characters – and so the end of the game – if you don't time things properly.

But if you relish the thought of spending endless nights muttering "I'll just try this..." and miss the days when solving a puzzle was a real challenge that ended with you looking through cheat books in HMV, you'll feel right at home here. Just don't tell any of your friends you've bought a game about druids.

a phone call? Of course, nobody in adventure games ever thinks of going to a cash machine.

DE-TA-IL

There's so much stuff to look at that some scenes – like museums and libraries – are almost multi-

media experiences. If you have the time and inclination to click on everything, you might even learn a thing or two. There is also plenty of background information on the characters to be found, adding to the layers of detail so often lacking in adventure games.

The acting isn't quite top drawer, but it's more than adequate and the dialogue doesn't feature any dodgy German translations. The actors are so incredibly clearly spoken that they sound like the ones who record Learn To Speak

END

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 32Mb **WE SAY** P350 with 64Mb RAM and a 3D card

PCZVERDICT

⊙ **UPPERS** Serious adventure that actually works • Makes druids interesting • Logical puzzles • Lots of detail

⊙ **DOWNERS** Too hard • Rubbish music • A few gameplay glitches • Druids

74 The best serious adventure game in years
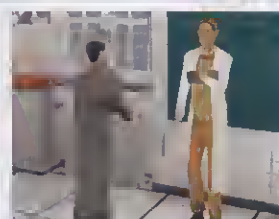

2 Your office is a bit of a mess, but there are quite a few useful objects in there.

3 Like these plastic bags – you'll find them in the second drawer from the bottom.

4 Go to the crime scene and use the plastic bags on the large human bone on the right.

5 Take the bone to Scotland Yard labs, where you'll make an interesting discovery...

"Look, no hands, no hands."

Always remember to look both ways if you don't want to get run over.

GRAND PRIX 3 2000 SEASON

★ £14.99 • Infogrames • Out September

When we told *Martin Korda* that another GP game was in for review he replied, "Not another F'ing 1." Sensitive lad

After the months of hype and countless promises that it would be the definitive F1 game of all time, *GP3* turned out to be a massive disappointment. In fact, in many ways, it was little more than *GP2* with some unimpressive 3D visuals. Which is a bit of a shame, as Geoff Crammond's previous GP titles both pushed the boundaries when it came to simulating F1 racing, something *GP3* totally failed to do. While it was by no means a poor game, it didn't have the several key features we'd all been looking forward to – such as Internet play, a tutorial and animated pit crews to name a few – and the fact that it had about as much atmosphere as a Wimbledon Vs Luton Town football match didn't help matters

> **"You get to race on two new circuits, which are both admirably recreated and all of the old circuits have had a makeover too"**

much either. So in a twist more predictable than a *Home And Away* plot, Crammond and co have made an add-on pack to try and rectify all the mistakes on the original, and although they'd like us to believe all the new features are improvements, rather than attempts to paper over the cracks. They're not fooling anyone.

IN PERSPECTIVE

F1 Championship: Season 2000 is still the top dog in the F1 paddock, mixing arcade and simulation elements in near perfect measures. Your best choice if you're looking for hardcore realism is *GP3*, which of course you'll need to own if you want to buy GP3 2000 Season. F1 Racing Championship is also well worth a look if you can put up with its overly aggressive AI.

F1 Championship: Season 2000

GP3

F1 Racing Championship

GP3 2000 Season

PATCHING UP

Once you've fired it up, it doesn't take long to figure out that not much has changed. In fact, it's hard not to think that this should have been a free download. OK, so the drivers and cars have all been updated, but they're still last year's, so you're effectively paying for old data. You get to race on two new circuits (Kuala Lumpur and Indianapolis), which are both admirably recreated, and all the old circuits have had a makeover too, with effects such as improved reflections adding some sheen to what's now looking like a slightly dated graphics engine. However, the apparently improved pit crews still move with less fluidity than a *South Park* character.

SOUNDING OFF

In order to try and inject some life into races, you can now listen to your pit crew barking orders at you over the radio, telling you how rubbish you are and threatening you with the sack unless you speed up. Well not quite, but their comments do help take your mind off the mosquito noises that are apparently coming out of your 800bhp engine. I've heard more powerful sounding milk floats. You can also hear cars around you, which sound more like a nest of hornets in a jam jar than a group of the most powerful cars on the planet. At least it no longer feels like you're the only driver on the circuit without a stealth car, but that's hardly a consolation.

And while we're being vaguely positive, it's good to see the replay function has been improved, allowing you to sit through a whole 90 agonising minutes of you veering round the circuit in a desperate attempt to get off the grass and onto the track.

To its shame, *GP3 2000* Season has no features to help the newbie and still lacks any kind of in-game tutorial. Because it's just as tricky as the original, only hardcore F1 Murray-quoting fanatics will get any real enjoyment out it. Oh, and there are still no Internet options.

GP3 2000 Season really isn't worth bothering with. Although it does marginally improve the game, it still hasn't rectified *GP3*'s main faults, and as such, should have been made available free of charge on the Internet. As is, it's a shameless and half-baked attempt to patch up a hugely flawed product. **PCZ**

PCZ VERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Two new circuits • Season 2000 cars, teams and drivers • Slightly improved graphics and sound effects • Excellent new replay facility

⊖ **DOWNERS** Still no Internet options • Still no tutorial • Still not accessible to F1 new comers • Should have been a free download

50 Polyfiller

"I never touched him."

STABLE MASTERS

⭐ £19.99 • Midas Games • Out now

Steve Hill indulges in some horseplay

Horse racing may be the Sport of Kings, but it has yet to make much of an impression upon the world of games, at least not in this country. Ironic then that it should be Midas Games who are attempting to strike gold with this comprehensive simulation of flat racing. It's certainly a niche market, but *Stable Masters* takes an admirably in-depth approach, albeit one that will be utterly bewildering to anyone without at least a nodding acquaintance with the insides of a betting shop.

The obvious reference point is *Championship Manager*, as *Stable Masters* attempts to do for horse racing what that game has done for football management. Naturally, it comes absolutely nowhere near, but it's a reasonable stab, and one that will go some way towards appeasing hardcore gamblers with unfulfilled fantasies of owning their own nags.

Said steeds can be entered into suitable races, and this is essentially the only real skill involved. Success comes from judging your horses' ability and form, and selecting the correct course, distance and jockey for them. The declarations can be tedious, but there isn't a great deal else to do, other than gamble on the races, which are represented by graphics that can at best be described as rudimentary.

Stable Masters definitely isn't a game for everyone, but basically you get as much out of it as you're prepared to put in. Ultimately though, if you're that dedicated, you might as well simply spend the day in Ladbrokes.
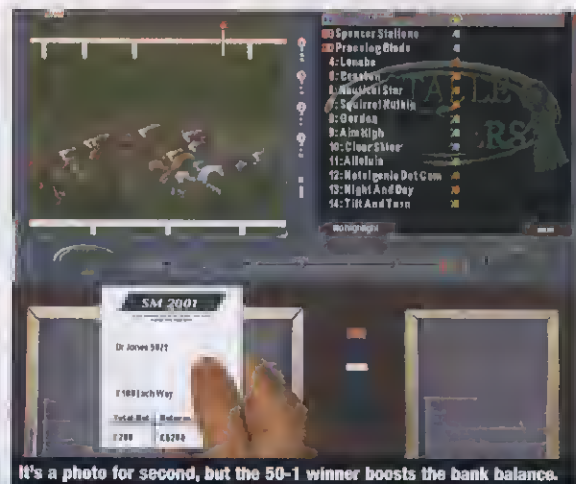
TECH SPECS

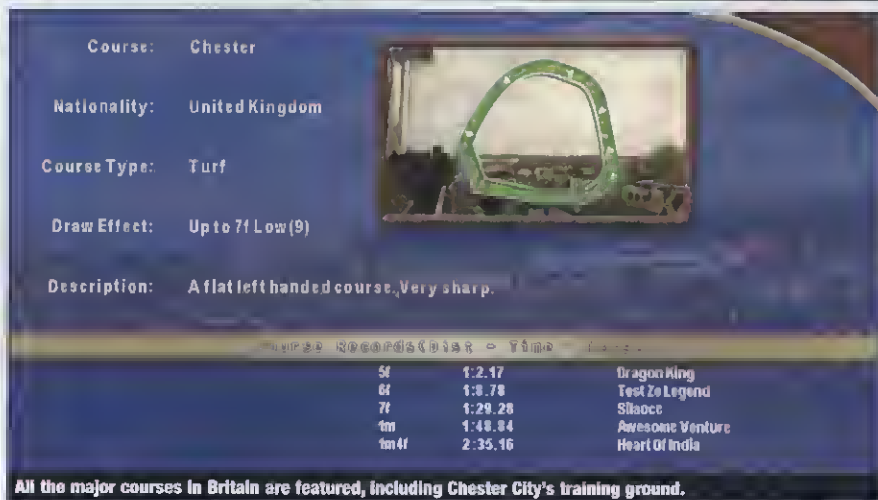**MINIMUM SYSTEM** Processor P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** It's hardly going to push your system to its limits

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Fairly authentic • No tax on betting
⊗ **DOWNERS** Simplistic graphics • Limited gameplay • No commentary • No jumps

48 The Sport of Kings

It's a photo for second, but the 50-1 winner boosts the bank balance.

Course:	Chester
Nationality:	United Kingdom
Course Type:	Turf
Draw Effect:	Up to 7f Low (9)
Description:	A flat left handed course. Very sharp.

5f	1:2.17	Dragon King
6f	1:8.78	Test Ze Legend
7f	1:29.28	Sikacce
1m	1:48.84	Awesome Venture
1m 4f	2:35.16	Heart Of India

All the major courses in Britain are featured, including Chester City's training ground.

TECHNOMAGE

⭐ £29.99 • Infogrames • Out now

Oliver Cross ponders his lineage while saving the world

Technomage is the poor man's *Zelda*, played from a badly designed isometric view, and boasting some of the most basic graphics seen on the PC for several years.

The background story is similar to *Arcanum*, seeing a fictional world divided into two groups – the Dreamers (magical folks) and the Steamers (mechanical geniuses). Each group is deeply suspicious of the other and relationships between two members of the opposite race are forbidden. You play the unfortunately named Melvin, the product of an illegal relationship between a Dreamer and a Steamer. As the game progresses you meet Talis, the obligatory love interest, and single-handedly try to end the hostility between the Dreamers and Steamers. The story is driven by a set of beautifully rendered FMVs, which along with the atmospheric soundtrack are the game's strongest features.

The main bulk of the game consists of block puzzles (moving a box so that you can press a switch) and combat (hammering the attack button and hoping something dies).

The camera can be rotated a full 360 degrees, allowing you to see in any direction, but unfortunately it's implemented so badly that all it does is disorientate you, often sending you off in completely the wrong direction. *Technomage* also has a nasty tendency to automatically adjust the camera as you enter new areas, meaning that you can get lost in the smallest and most basic village simply by walking out of a building.

Do not touch *Technomage* even with an extremely long bargepole. It's unoriginal and uninspiring, although you may occasionally find the odd moment or two of fun.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P266 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb 3D card **WE SAY** Try a PII 300 for smoother gameplay

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Easy to play • Good music • Beautiful FMVs
⊗ **DOWNERS** Really terrible graphics • Dodgy sound • Crap plotline • Extremely annoying camera

25 Get an emulator and play *Zelda* instead

Isn't it cute.

The graphics are somewhat lacking.

KILLER TANK

⭐ £19.99 • Akaei • Out August 30

Anthony Holden finds out why they call him a Sherman Tanker

Here in the *PC ZONE* think-tank we do our best to reward the battlers of the industry – the developers who don't have the resources of the big studios yet still manage to entertain us in some small way. *Killer Tank* is not a great game, was never going to be a great game, and had the developers not had the foresight to fill the game with gratuitous carnage it would have disappeared without a trace. As it is, *Killer Tank* proves to be quite a decent afternoon's diversion, re-acquainting us with the simple pleasures of killing defenceless foot traffic with an amphibious armoured assault vehicle.

It's essentially a straight-forward arcade shooting spree, featuring 20 objective-based missions ranging from planting nukes to escorting cocaine convoys. With typical B-grade abandon, you play a hardened crim rescued from death row by a crazed scientist hellbent on global domination, which has the convenient pay-off of freeing you from any awkward moral considerations. So, apart from tackling an array of genuinely threatening opponents such as helicopters, hoverships and arachnid robotic monsters, you can have all sorts of fun with the many foot soldiers who cross your path. The game often gets into *Carmageddon* territory in this respect, as you burn, splatter and squish soldiers and civilians alike, leaving a trail of tomato sauce track marks as you go. There's also an impressive number of environmental objects to destroy, which, aside from exposing extra power-ups and weapon upgrades, adds a great deal of credence to the potency of your mega-tank.

Having said all this, the game is severely deficient in technical terms, most notably in the constant visible draw-in and frequent slowdown. And whoever was responsible for the woeful hand-drawn cut-scenes really should be brought to justice, and fast. For a bit of cheap, dirty fun though, without the usual legal hassles, it's not a bad laugh.

Amateurish it may be, but it's undeniably entertaining.

TECH SPECS
MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233 **Memory** 32 Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** At least 64 Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card

PCZ**VERDICT**

⬆ **UPPERS** Wantonly violent • Selection of cool weapons • Simple arcade interface

⬇ **DOWNERS** Appalling draw distance • Truly appalling cut-scenes • Fairly repetitive gameplay
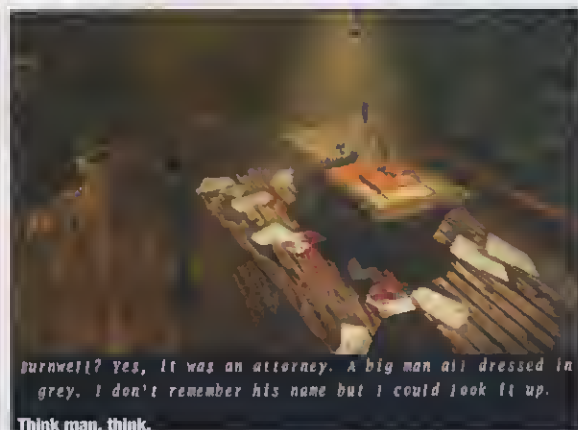
59 The best tank game of the month

Those cheap polyester uniforms were clearly a mistake.

JEKYLL AND HYDE

⭐ £19.99 • Cryo • Out now

Tom Dance tried to persuade us they don't have a split personality

Dr Jekyll, I presume?

burnwell? Yes, it was an attorney. A big man all dressed in grey. I don't remember his name but I could look it up.
Think man, think.

Think *Tomb Raider* set 100 years ago, add a collection of clumsy zombie-like lunatics, take control of a man with a split personality and you'll have a vague idea of what *Jekyll And Hyde* is about. It's a third-person action adventure, but you are given the option to switch to a first-person view to survey your surroundings.

You play Jekyll, a doctor whose mental asylum is having big problems controlling its inmates. The well-written story starts with the rescue of your daughter, Laurie, who has been kidnapped by a dangerous inmate and the only way to save her is by resurrecting Dr Jekyll's evil and supposedly dead alter ego Mr Hyde. Large amounts of zombie slaying is required as well as a lot of patience, as the poor selection of controls are not the easiest to master, and often lead to you falling off ledges to your death.

The action is quite smooth but is often broken up by frequent screen loading, which makes the whole gaming experience less enjoyable. The camera can also be annoying. Instead of being fixed behind you, you're given control can move it around the doctor. This is helpful in some areas, but in many places swinging the camera can lead to it getting stuck in a room while you're still outside.

Sound in the game is excellent, with atmospheric screams and other spine-tingling noises heightening the tension, however, during the frequent cut-scenes the character interaction is poor and the acting wooden. These scenes can't be skipped and the automatic save function (there isn't a manual one) means you have to sit through them each time you die.

Jekyll And Hyde has a good storyline and some great sound effects, but doesn't add anything new to the genre. It also has some frustrating bugs, which lowers the enjoyment factor. Overall, good sounds and story can't disguise poor controls and bugs, and the fact that it's a very average game.

TECH SPECS
MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 300 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** PII 450, 64Mb RAM and 16Mb 3D card

PCZ**VERDICT**

⬆ **UPPERS** Good storyline • Excellent sound

⬇ **DOWNERS** Poor controls • Bugged • Enjoyment rubs off quickly

56 Not worth raising the dead for

PERSIAN WARS

⭐ £19.99 • Cryo • Out Now

Martin Korda has never been in a war and he's not from Persia, but has been known to review the odd game every now and then

These days it seems as though you can't get to the end of this magazine without stumbling across at least one substandard, clumsily thrown together RTS, so in a bid not to disappoint, here's this month's token offering, *Persian Wars*.

You play as Sinbad, the legendary Arabian seafarer and film character, who for some inexplicable reason, doesn't actually do any seafaring, instead preferring to hang around the desert getting into fights with skeletons and rival tribes. Simpleton.

Persian Wars offers you the choice of two campaigns, the first one revolving around the somewhat disconcerting theme of Solomon's Ring, which proves to be rather less sordid and much more orientated around finding a magical piece of jewellery than first impressions may suggest. The gameplay is split into two

sections, tactical and combat. The first allows you to move your troops around a map, which can be roamed around fairly freely as you search for magic items and treasure. Combat is utterly mundane and relies on little more than the size and strength of your forces, making tactics and organisation pretty much pointless.

To make matters that little bit worse, your units are about as visually appealing as an exposed scrotum on a harsh winter's day, while some of the AI's about twice as hairy. Most missions rarely prove to be more than just a passing distraction, although, to be fair, there are plenty of mission goals such as rescue attempts and attacking and defending outposts and strongholds. There's also a well thought out collection of units ranging from the magical to the mythological, which actually encourages you to

persevere for at least a couple of hours. Ultimately, though, *Persian Wars* is still an uninspired RTS which should be avoided unless you have an unhealthy love of Arabian sailors and simplistic strategy games.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 32Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 250Mb HD Space **WE SAY** PII 300 and 64Mb RAM will help keep things moving smoothly.

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Diverse set of units • Varied mission goals
⊖ **DOWNERS** Tragic graphics • Poor AI • One dimensional combat

43 Persian Bores

The units range from the mythical to the mystical.

Little donkey, little donkey on a sandy beach.

Eggs, rice, toilet paper... oh god!

Everyone's gone home and I'm still racing.

LEADFOOT

⭐ £19.99 • Take Two • Out now

We like a dirty truck as much as the next man. And the next man is *James Lyon*

Describe the game: a stadium bassed off-road racing simulation. Elaborate: souped-up trucks and buggies driving around dirt tracks and over jumps and bumps for whooping Yanks' amusement. Speculate wildly how many people are interested in the sport over here: five. Try to explain why people should care: the game attempts to recreate the thrills and excitement of meaty, throbbing engines and stomach-churning stunts. But? Fails. Why? Extremely difficult handling. How? Oil on an ice rink grip and oversensitive steering. Does this result from an attempt to steer away from instant access arcade action towards a simulated physics approach? Yes. Anything else? An anal level of detail in relation to tuning your vehicle. Isn't that a good thing? Not if you have to do it to come in anything higher than last place. Aren't you just being shit? No. Reason? This is on the lowest

difficulty setting. Explain difficulties in relation to driver AI: they never make mistakes. What are the consequences of turning AI down to 0 per cent? The cars at the back go slightly slower but still follow a near perfect racing line.

Give your opinion on the graphics: functional. Expand: utilitarian second-generation video card textures. Correlate graphics with atmosphere: functional. Is this because of a rigid cut-out crowd, muted presence of competition and unremarkable stunt effects? Possibly.

Return to a description of modes: two – quick race and career. Was career enjoyable? Not really. Why? The soul-sapping atmosphere, mechanical tinkering and lack of instant accessibility deterred me from generating the sort of immediate arousal expected from the sport. Question the possibility of people

persevering: do you really want to spend hours improving your skills on a lacklustre game when you could be playing *Colin McCrae 2*? Condense the above information: it's a bit dull. Would you like a biscuit? Yes, please.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 266MHz Memory 32Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** PII 300 and a steering wheel for sure

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Realistic • Mechanical attention to detail
⊖ **DOWNERS** Difficult handling • Overly tough competitors • Void atmosphere • Mechanical attention to detail.

52 The Rich Tea of driving games: plain and lacking in greatness

DRACULA 2: THE LAST SANCTUARY

● £24.99 • Canal Multimedia • Out Now

Rhianna Pratchett lives life in a stuffy underground vault with no natural light. But that's the ZONE office

The opening of Dracula 2: The Last Sanctuary looks fairly promising. A few slick cut-scenes, which pick the storyline up nicely from Dracula: Resurrection, see our hero Jonathan Harker escaping from the Count's clutches with his recently cursed girlfriend Mina and high-tailing it back to London. Cue a bit of macho posturing from el toothy, who looks more like Marilyn Manson than Gary Oldman, and a vow to get back his woman. Pretty much the kind of stuff you'd expect from a classic story that had a thousand bosoms heaving in the night. Unfortunately from there onwards this adventure/puzzler, despite being much better than its predecessor, starts a rapid decent to the grave.

The puzzles are more taxing than in the original game, although, most of them involve trailing the pointer over dim parts of the screen for ages. Many life or death puzzles have a time limit, but the annoyingly un-detailed inventory and the difficulty in selecting items makes the game stilted and unrealistic, as you tend to have too much time in pressure situations to compensate for the clumsy interface. Only a blind, arthritic werewolf would wait for you to shoot the lock off a door, open the door, go into the next room and close it behind you, before he made a move.

In all fairness though, the cut-scenes are by far and away the best aspect of the gameplay and if the entire game had been raised to that standard we'd be talking more along the mid-70s score line. Instead, the majority of Dracula 2 remains depressingly static, your mouse pointer being virtually the only on-screen movement, and as you can only go in the direction and interact with the objects the game wants you to, that won't be a hell of a lot. Sadly, it's another adventure/puzzler that goes quietly into the night.

TECH SPECS

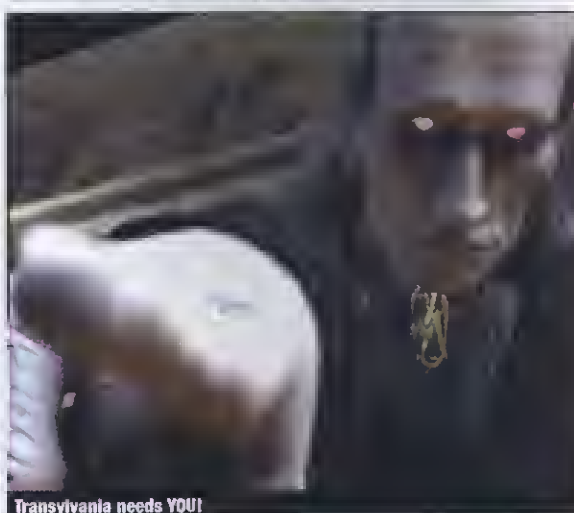**MINIMUM SYSTEM** Processor P166MHz **Memory** 32 Mb RAM **WE SAY** Go for a P266

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Good cut-scenes • Puzzles are more taxing

⊖ **DOWNERS** Static environment • Puzzles tend to be repetitive • Poorly labelled inventory
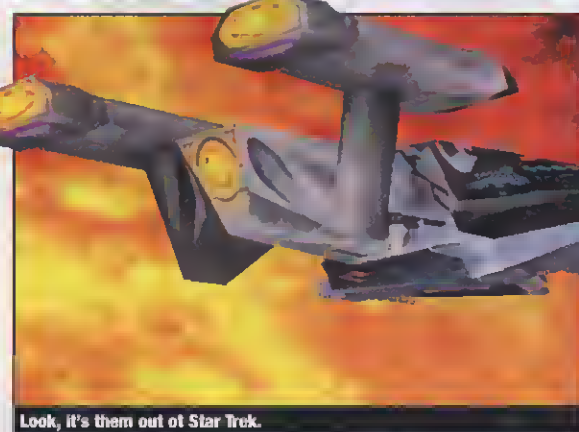
50 Very little bite
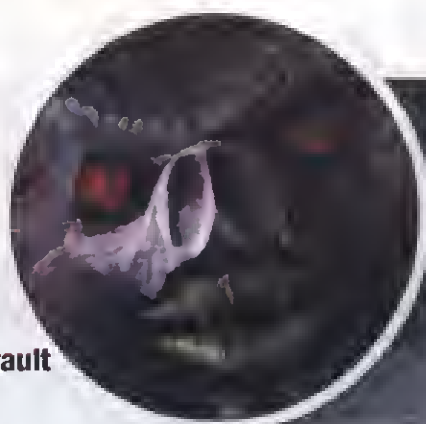
Ah, the old reflecting sunlight through a door trick.

Transylvania needs YOU!

STAR TREK: STARFLEET COMMAND ORION PIRATES

● £19.99 • Interplay • Out now

If Chris Anderson were a Trekkie, he would never admit it

There are some games that have you on the edge of your seat for the wrong reasons. This is one of them. More than once I glanced nervously over my shoulder to see if anyone was going to enter the room and catch me playing it. Not because it's a bad game, but because it's so inherently geeky, with its ancient interface and realms of techy-sounding dials and buttons. A casual onlooker would fear for your sanity if they happened by and saw you stuck in front of your computer twiddling knobs and playing with little Star Trek spaceships. That's not to say it's particularly tricky. What seems at first glance to be a scary heavy-duty strategy game is actually a fairly simple series of missions in which you take control of a spaceship and go about the serious business of blowing up lots of other spaceships.

The biggest challenge in Orion Pirates is not in making key strategic decisions at vital moments, but rather in managing the energy usage of your ship. Your ship's weapons use energy when you fire them, which in turn cuts down the amount of energy available for powering other parts of your ship. For example, your speed is determined by how much energy you have available – if your energy is low, your ship will travel at a snail's pace. Graphically, it's a mixed bag. The actual combat screen OK, with satisfying and colourful explosions, but the ship control screen looks as though it has almost been lifted from an old Amiga game with its big brash boxes and bland colours.

You also have the opportunity to play as the Orion Pirates for the first time and a 12-mission campaign plus three bonus missions based on the TV episode entitled A Piece Of The Action are also included. If you like your space combat relaxed and thoughtful as opposed to frenetic, you could do a lot worse than giving Orion Pirates a whirl. Star Trek fans, of course, will love it. Sorry, I just had to say that.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 300 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** PIII 450, 64Mb RAM and 16Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Refreshingly different space combat experience • Good battle graphics • The music's alright.

⊖ **DOWNERS** Tacky ship control screen • Campaign becomes repetitive after extended play

76 More of the same. With pirates

The thinking man's space combat sim.

Look, it's them out of Star Trek.

IT'S EASY PC

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● **WORDS** Oliver Cross

JIMMY WHITE'S 2 – CUEBALL

BEST BUY

● LucasArts Classic • £4.99 • Out now

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Although this game was released on budget six months ago, the price has dropped again, this time to a fiver. And, seeing as it caters for pretty much everyone, featuring snooker, pool, darts, draughts and even the arcade classic *DropZone*, we reckon it's a bargain.

The physics engine is spot on, with balls happily and accurately ricocheting around the table the way they would in real life, and although it's not a patch on the latest release of *Virtual Pool* it's cheap and extremely cheerful.

On the downside, the cheesy background music can grate on the nerves at times, but replacing the game disc with your own music CDs quickly remedies this minor annoyance (Richie recommends Radiohead if you're losing). *Jimmy White's 2* is one of the best of its genre and is well worth a fiver. Awesome Development is also currently working on *Jimmy White's Cueball 3*, which we previewed last issue.

PCZVERDICT   **81%**

The pool hall itself.

Still one of the best snooker games around.

Those pesky plastic men.

Just tread on them.

ARMY MEN II

● Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

"Nothing is as fun as melting tan troops into puddles of plastic" declares the blurb on the back of the *Army Men II* box. Perhaps 3DO has never played *Command & Conquer*? *Age Of Empires*? The 'Pluck-your-own-pubic-hair-out-with-rusty-tweezers' game? All of these are considerably more fun than a session of *Army Men II*.

Bland Graphics, simplistic AI, non-existent pathfinding and the inability to control most of your troops make this a gaming experience not worth having.

The only reason this game isn't getting the infamous Pants award is that there *is* something strangely appealing about killing plastic soldiers, but *Army Men II* only brushes the surface and is a very poor excuse for a strategy game.

PCZVERDICT   **25%**

TRANSPORT TYCOON DELUXE

● Replay • £4.99 • Out now

The basic goal of *Transport Tycoon* is to become… well, a transport tycoon. You achieve this by building up an empire of trains, ships, road vehicles and aeroplanes over a randomly generated map.

Each map is filled with a selection of towns and industrial buildings. Your job is to connect them, supplying each with what they need. The control system is simple, with pop up windows providing you with building options, a map indicating potential links and a profit/loss description for each of your vehicles.

Six years after its original release, this is still an excellent strategy game, albeit a slightly decrepit one, but anyone who likes building sims should snap it up immediately.
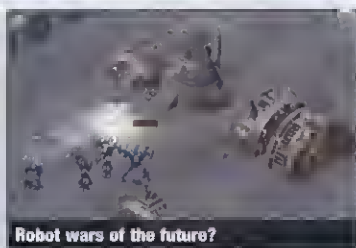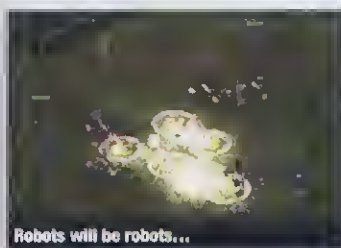
PCZVERDICT   **72%**

Not pretty, but very, very good.

The thriving town of St Luis.

Robots will be robots...

Robot wars of the future?

MECHCOMMANDER GOLD

✪ Replay • £9.99 • Out now

Mechcommander borrows some of the real-time strategy elements of *Command & Conquer* and mixes them with the pre-mission planning and the small squads of *X-Com: Apocalypse*.

Unfortunately the game doesn't really work well on either level any more. With no revolutionary ideas, *Mechcommander* makes for a fairly standard strategy game.

If you're a hardcore strategy player looking for something to play on the cheap then this is worth a try. If you've got money to burn then go for either *Z: Steel Soldiers* or the sequel to *MechCommander*, which we've reviewed on page 72.

PCZ VERDICT   **70%**

SOUL REAVER: LEGACY OF KAIN

✪ Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

Sequel to the PlayStation hit *Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain*, *Soul Reaver* has made the leap into the world of 3D. In most respects it succeeds, with the controls working pretty well for what is effectively a PlayStation conversion.

However, the game is confusing at times, and it often leaves you unsure as to what you're supposed to do next. And where *Blood Omen* had the 'drink blood' button to provide some controversy, *Soul Reaver* has replaced it with a rather unimpressive 'devour soul' command. Thankfully, Crystal Dynamics has made up for this by introducing the 'impale\throw' key, which adds hours of shallow fun, making this well worth the price of a couple of pints.

PCZ VERDICT   **70%**

Raziel wishes he'd remembered his raincoat.
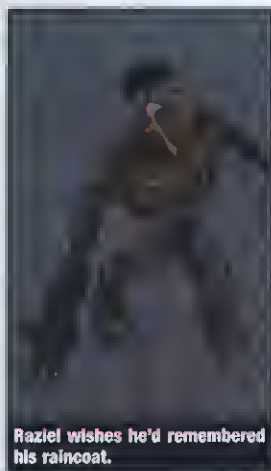
ARCHIPELAGOS 2000

✪ Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

The first *Archipelagos* was considered a bit of a maverick classic in its time, with its blend of puzzle-based strategy, outright weirdness and thousands of similar-looking levels.

The *2000* version, as with so many of these re-issues doesn't really add anything to the legend, with improved graphics and almost identical gameplay.

The aim is to hover around the quaint 3D landscape, clicking on some rocks, then clicking on an obelisk to complete the level, all to the accompaniment of

The world of *Archipelagos*.

bad music. Look for the original on the Internet if you're intrigued, but don't buy this.

PCZ VERDICT   **32%**

BREAKOUT

✪ Replay • £4.99 • Out now

PCZONE PANTS Hear that whirring sound? That's the designer of the original *Breakout* spinning in his grave. What? He's not dead? Well, this game will kill him.

The idea of the game is to take *Breakout*, a 2D Atari game that involved batting a ball into a group of blocks to destroy them, and turning it into a 3D extravaganza. It fails, miserably. The music, the bright graphics and the terrible physics engine all seem to be geared towards making *Breakout* as annoying an experience as possible. The only use for

Die. Please. Just die.

this game would be to feed it into your enemy's computer during times of war and watch as the enemy's brains leaked out of their ears. Even then, it would probably come under the atrocities section of the Geneva Convention. Avoid...

PCZ VERDICT   **18%**

REVENANT

✪ Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

When we first reviewed *Revenant* almost two years ago, we were slightly tickled by the mix of *Diablo*-style hacking and impressive graphics, but seriously underwhelmed by the story, which would make RPG fans brought up on a diet of *Baldur's Gate* and *Planescape: Torment* choke on their breakfast.

There are bits of the game that are still worth pausing over though. The standard *Diablo* fare of real-time combat is improved with the addition of combos and smoother animations.

However, you're still going to have to contend with the names (Locke D'Averam, of the House of Averam) and the fact that

Revenant features some smooth combat animations.

giant spiders turn into gold coins and chicken drumsticks when you kill them. If you're no purist though, and you're partial to a bit of cheese, this still holds its own. Well no one else would want to...

PCZ VERDICT   **75%**

ARMOR COMMAND

✪ Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

Armor Command is a real-time strategy, one of the first of its kind to take tentative footsteps into 3D. Unfortunately, it fails completely. The graphics are terrible, clipping errors are rife (units often pass through each other to get to a target) and the gameplay largely consists of clicking randomly as your troops chug slowly towards their target.

The control system is fine, if your parents happen to be mutated octopi. Simply selecting a unit involves holding down the shift key and right clicking on an individual.

In its defence, *Armor Command* was making a bold step in the right direction, as we have seen from such hits as *Ground Control* and *Earth: 2150*. It introduced new ideas, but implemented them terribly.

PCZ VERDICT   **25%**

Nice idea. Crap gameplay.

Time to blow something up.

FEEDBACK

Martin Korda leads the charge into this month's feedback action

> **It stands towering over *Delta Force: Land Warrior* in terms of realism. There are no morons for enemies here**
>
> JON PRITCHARD ON *OPERATION FLASHPOINT*

OPERATION FLASHPOINT

REVIEWED *PCZ* #104, Jul 2001
SCORE 90%

What we said

"Some of you will hate it, there's no getting around that. Most of you, hopefully, will become as absorbed by the atmosphere, engrossed by the gameplay and impressed by the ambition as we are."

What you thought

○ Having discovered your mag by accident a couple of months back I was more than happy to be greeted by your review of a game called *Operation Flashpoint*. Being a military/gun/FPS nut, I was naturally intrigued. So much so that, on the basis of your review, I ran off cash in hand, evading the wife, and purchased it on the day of release. Is it as good as you said? Will I buy your magazine again? Oh yes indeedy to both.

I am running it on a Celeron 433 with 192Mb RAM and a Voodoo3 3000 at 1024x768, with hardly any problems. In terms of gameplay, it's superb. Enemy AI is excellent, weapons sound and feel authentic, and the lack of a scope sight shows how other games have compromised on realism. You've got to aim, ladies.

The ability to go anywhere is rivalled only by the likes of the *Delta Force* series. *Operation Flashpoint* adds the ability to be tactical and is a real test of your personal ingenuity and cunning. It stands towering over *Delta Force: Land Warrior* in terms of realism. There are no morons for enemies here. The confusion, chaos and danger of casualties by friendly and enemy fire during section attacks takes me back to my years serving in HM Forces (albeit only in exercise conditions). I own the *Rainbow Six* series, *Delta Force 1* and *Land Warrior*, and the *Half-Life* series, all of which I enjoy immensely, but *Operation Flashpoint* stands out as a true achievement in combat simulation. If mindless repetitive blasting is your thing, look elsewhere. If you want to get the feel of real combat without the risk of a body bag and lice, then this is for you. Lock and load, smoke 'em if you got 'em and any other war movie cliché you can think of.
Jon Pritchard

○ After reading your review of *Operation Flashpoint* and deciding that I could live with some unpolished looks and a few graphical bugs, I bought it. I must say, for the most part your review was spot on. The vehicles are integrated perfectly, the variety in the missions is amazing and the mission editor is easy to use. The buildings are a bit repetitive and the trees are a bit dodgy, but when you realise the amount of terrain the game has to render, the odd flat bush is acceptable. Alas your review failed me on a key area: bugs. You mentioned the graphical bugs, but you failed to mention some of the more serious bugs. For example, the way the game will sometimes crash to the main menu after completing a mission without saving, which is very frustrating. Also, you say you test the games on a variety of machines and yet you completely missed the frequent crashes to desktop, game freezes and blue screens of death that I and many other people I've spoken to on the *OFP* forums seem to get. How about devoting a few sentences to bugs and errors in your reviews?
Alex Bladon

○ Personally I don't know how to review a game like you do – I would just rate it by judging how much I get out of it. That's why I'd give *Operation Flashpoint* 96 per cent. It's such a good game, and one that I play more than *Black & White*. I especially like the way your squad leader can give orders like: "Two, engage enemy 12 o'clock". It makes me feel like I'm part of a war movie. Teamwork is very important; you can't just run off and do whatever you want because you will get shot.

The AI is clever, too. It responds to all your actions. For example, the leader will order the squad to run if there are lots of enemies, and engage if there are only a few Russians. There are also three types of game modes to play, which I know will take me at least a month to play through. I would definitely recommend the game to anyone.
Pete P

○ After reading your review and, of course, playing the excellent demo, I decided to grab a copy of *Operation Flashpoint* the moment it came out. I was positively wetting myself with excitement when I thought about running around and piloting several different vehicles during a mission. So imagine my disappointment when I found out most missions are very linear affairs when it comes to the mode of transport you take.

Mission one: run around on foot. Mission two: drive tank. Mission three: black ops behind enemy lines. Mission four: fly helicopter. Then repeat process.

The thing is, there's just something about this game that makes me go back for more. I have to say the AI is excellent for the most part, with only occasional lapses in what is otherwise excellent programming. I haven't encountered any graphical glitches at all, and

"You look different Bill. Have you done something with your hair?"

"Oi, back off doc. This one's wallet is mine."

overall the game is excellently presented – although I have noticed the sound tends to fluctuate during cut-scenes.

This game definitely has a certain something about it and I would recommend it to anyone, but make sure you don't make the same mistake as I did in thinking that you can just hop in a tank whenever you feel like it, because you can't.

Scott Abbott aka Diddy_Bong

Comment
This has got to be some kind of first, all of you agreeing that the AI of a game is excellent. What the hell is going on? Where are the letters of complaint, whining about idiotic enemies who stand motionless in front of you as you take their heads off with a well-aimed bazooka shot? Hmmm? I mean come on, I was expecting at least one letter of outrage at the very least. Or is it possible

that the faith we put into *Operation Flashpoint* has been justified by some of the most intelligent and realistic AI yet seen in a computer game? You know what? I think it just may have been.

Granted, there are some clumsy bugs that need ironing out (although we never came across the crashing bugs you mention Alex, but each PC is different). Hopefully there'll soon be a patch available to sort out all of these glitches, and we'll be sure to stick it on our cover disc just as soon as it appears. Oh yeah, and one more thing before I forget, I know where you live Jon – so if you don't want your wife to find out what you're really up to in WHSmith while she goes clothes shopping, I suggest you send me some sort of bribe pronto. Cheques, cash, and/or weightlifting equipment welcome.

HALF-LIFE: BLUE SHIFT
REVIEWED *PCZ* #105, Jul 2001
SCORE 78%
What we said
"As a stopgap before *Half-Life 2*, *Blue Shift* doesn't quite live up to expectations, but *H-L* addicts with cash to burn should certainly give it a go."

What you thought
⊗ Well, I've just completed *Blue Shift*, and I agree it is short. Oh, and the ending is, as you said in the review, a bit abrupt and a somewhat of a letdown. Having said that, any *Half-Life* fan should get it, otherwise they'll be wondering what they're missing. You can still get stuck in the bloody lifts, though.

As for £14.99 being good value for money, I'd have to say that personally I think it's a bit steep. I think £9.99 would have been a fairer price. However, the graphics upgrade does manage to sweeten the blow.

Once again, another accurate and well thought-out *PCZ* review. That's why I'm a regular reader.
John Malcolm

games store and I reserved myself a copy. On the day of its release I went home and completed it in three hours.

> **❝The game is so brief it could have been a free download. Even *Gunman Chronicles* took longer to complete❞**
>
> **P. REAY ON *HALF-LIFE: BLUE SHIFT***

⊗ Allow me to set the scene. I've been playing *Blue Shift* for around two hours, and have just jumped through a teleport after sending some scientists first. I sit back as they talk to me for a bit and then, to my amazement, the game ends. I can't believe it – it's the shortest game in history.

It's also full of mistakes. For example, just before the end you walk past a locked door. You can hear the grunts that are going to ambush you when you go back past it, but all you have to do to take them out is throw in a couple of well-placed satchel charges. I'd advise everyone to avoid this game like the plague. Free add-ons such as *Time-Line* and *Time-Line 2* are each twice as long as this crappy game and far more entertaining.
Michael Judge aka Graegothaka Aloreth

⊗ What a bloody disappointment. *Half-Life: Blue Shift* was the shortest game I have ever played. I thought *Gunman Chronicles* was short, but this game takes the biscuit. OK so you get to play as Barney, the bumbling security guard who is meant to bring new life to the game (which he does slightly), but he does nothing else for it. When I read your preview I was excited that another *Half-Life* product was coming out, so I went to my local computer

And after the short amount of gameplay, you're greeted by the crappiest ending ever. A total waste of £15.
Tim Vincent

⊗ Having bought *Half-Life* and *Opposing Force*, I thought *Blue Shift* would be a nice addition to the collection. However despite the low price, the game is so brief it could have been a free download (the high-definition pack add-on is good though). Even *Gunman Chronicles* took longer to complete. That said, at least they kept the alien planet rubbish to a minimum.
P Reay

Comment
Well, you can't say we didn't warn you. *Half-Life: Blue Shift* is rather on the short side, and hardened Half-Lifers won't take more than a few hours to play through the whole thing. But as the old adage goes, it's not how long it is, it's what you do with it. And though it can be completed in less than a day, *Blue Shift* is still full of entertainment and some excellent enemies. However, one of the best things about it is the graphics update, which gives us all the excuse we've been looking for to spend a week or so playing through the original *Half-Life* again. Now if that's not worth a few quid, I don't know what is.

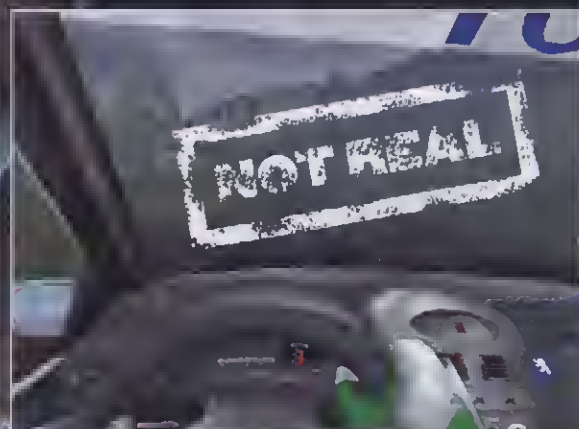Everyone agrees, *Half-Life: Blue Shift* is way too short.

REALITY CHECK:
OFF-ROAD DRIVING

In the first of a new series, *Steve Hill* takes a tentative step into the world outside his window

REAL **VS** NOT REAL

Welcome to the real world. A world where objects have physical form, and actions have consequences. A world in which you can't shoot people without legal repercussions, flip a car without physical injury, fly military aircraft without years of training, score a hat trick for England or pot a century break. Grim old reality – the humdrum place you return to when you hit your PC's off switch.

It doesn't have to be that way. Many of the virtual activities in which we excel at do, of course, exist in real life. We're not talking about *Tetris*, but a host of activities have all made the leap from reality into our monitors with varying degrees of success. So does playing games prepare you for the real thing? And how do the experiences compare? The first experiment has been conducted, with others to follow. Now if only we could find the real *Erotica Island*.

CAN'T DRIVE, WON'T DRIVE
I can't drive. At least not very well, and I don't even own a car. In fact, the idea of regularly

covered, and even employs the services of professional rally drivers as instructors. But will they be professional enough to detect my risible lack of mileage, or will my countless hours of PC practice reap dividends?

At this stage, I'm almost ready to give myself up. "Don't look so nervous," an instructor cheerfully barks as I edge my way towards the rear of the group, some of whom have already set off enthusiastically in the four Peugeot 106 GTi rally cars provided. As the cars tear around the purpose-built course, it becomes apparent that if I can't even get mine to move then I'm going to look something of a tit.

While mentally repeating the mantra 'accelerator, brake, clutch', I am bucked from my fearful trance and pointed in the direction of the waiting car. With the seat adjusted to prevent my wrists snapping, I am securely strapped in and wired up to my co-driver who instructs me to start her up. Traditionally, this involves pressing 'Enter' on the keyboard or a button on the joypad. With neither in evidence, I discover a magic key to the right of the big round thing and cautiously give it a turn.

Pick a car, any car.

Hill gets to grips with his car. Slowly.

> **"My co-driver instructs me to start her up. Traditionally, this involves pressing 'Enter' on the keyboard or a button on the joypad"**

guiding a vehicle along a busy motorway is only marginally less alien to me than the concept of flying a rocket to the moon. Frankly, I find the thought of steering a high-speed metal box along a strip of tarmac quite terrifying, and am amazed that people can regularly do it without slewing off the road or constantly colliding with each other. It's tantamount to witchcraft. Either that, or I'm an idiot.

It is therefore with some trepidation that I find myself suited and helmeted in a Portakabin at Silverstone racecourse. As well as organising the odd rain-sodden Grand Prix, Silverstone offers a wealth of driving events, where, for the right price, boy/girl racers can live out their four-wheeled fantasies in an impressive variety of vehicles, including quad bikes, karts, Formula First single-seaters, and even an E-Type Jag or Lotus Elise.

Given that I've reviewed pretty much every rally game to land on the *ZONE* doormat in the last few years, this seems an appropriate place to start. Silverstone has it

CAR TROUBLE
The engine roars into life, I drop the clutch and we're away, leaving an obligatory trail of dust in our wake. It's an absolute doddle, and under heavy prompting, I even manage to find second gear. Unfortunately, the confident start is somewhat curtailed by the appearance of the first bend. With a lack of cursor keys available, I opt for the steering wheel, and in direct violation of the briefing, I

start feeding it through my hands like a greased eel. "Keep your hands on the wheel!" urges the instructor as the car haplessly weaves all over the track like a scene from Alistair Stewart's darkest nightmare.

As driving goes, it's more Ronald McDonald than Colin McRae, and the increasingly exasperated instructor's voice fills my helmet, answered alternately by volleys of foul language and sheepish apologies

from me. It's a world away from the calm instructions that computer games had led me to expect, with placid directions such as 'Easy left, hairpin right' eschewed in favour of urgent shouting and wild gesticulations. ➔

HOW REAL IS... COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

This might be the most realistic rally simulator around, but it's still a world away from being strapped into an actual car with a roaring engine. Naturally, it's the physical sensation that is the most noticeable, as you are bucked around the cockpit while grappling with a steering wheel that seems to have plans of its own. The road surfaces in *McRae* are superbly realised, but still can't come close to the feeling of sliding over mud and gravel that is inches beneath your increasingly unsteady arse.

Furthermore, the clipped tones of McRae's co-driver, Nicky Grist, bear no relation to the frantic barking of my instructor, although this is largely due to my errant driving and efforts to destroy his car. Playing *McRae* again after the rallying experience, it's clear that immense effort has been put into the game, and there is certainly an impressive degree of realism in evidence. In fact, having mastered handbrake turns for real, I now find it easier in the game. Also, gears can be set to automatic, and if you break the car you don't get yelled at.

Hill's virtual driving skills also seem to be lacking.

Second gear, what's that?

Under instruction, I attempt a couple of handbrake turns. This seems to go OK, all things considered, although the instructor has to cut the power when I attempt to accelerate with the handbrake still engaged. He is becoming increasingly suspicious of my lack of driving skills, and the final straw comes when I inadvertently change from first to fifth gear, bringing the car to a grinding halt. Remaining quite calm, the instructor radios for another car as we crawl into the pits in an extremely unwell vehicle. Not the best of starts then.

DRIVING ALONG IN MY 4X4

All is not lost though, and I have the chance to redeem myself at the wheel of an Isuzu Trooper 4x4 – the sort of thing middle-class parents use to take Josh and Olivia to their prep school. At Silverstone, it's used for what it was designed for, that is, surmounting unfeasibly hazardous terrain. An instructor drives three of us round for a preliminary lap, before handing over control to myself. Fortunately,

it's first gear all the way, and I masterfully guide the tank/buggy through several feet of water, along rocky ditches, and up some sheer man-made slopes, where all you can see out of the windscreen

> **"The instructor has to cut the power when I accelerate with the handbrake engaged"**

is the sky. The down slope is equally perilous, and with no dual control, all it requires is a moment of mental aberration on my part to endanger the lives of four people. I'm not allowed to tackle the so-called suicide drop, where it later transpires that a corporate punter recently performed an impromptu forward roll. No such mishaps befall us, although when I crunch it into second gear on the home straight, the instructor asks me if I usually drive an automatic. Er, something like that...

With confidence buoyed, mock celebrations are conducted on the actual Silverstone rostrum. A presentation follows, with certificates and trinkets handed out, including "the worst driver of the day... Steve Hill," whereby I am roundly humiliated and presented with a pair of comedy windscreen-wiper glasses. Bastards. **PCZ**

HOW REAL IS... SCREAMER 4X4

Flippantly dismissed as *Sim Land Rover* in the review, this is a pretty spot-on simulation of slowly driving absurdly large vehicles over dangerous obstacles. Remember to take it easy though: if you start giving it *Dukes Of Hazzard* over virtually sheer inclines, then there is going to be serious damage both to man and machine.

In some ways, the 4X4 part of the day was more frightening than the rally driving, as one lapse of concentration can see you plummet groundwards. They're fairly sturdy vehicles though, and if handled correctly are capable of impressive feats. An extremely cautious approach is rewarded, both in real life and in the game, which doesn't necessarily make for the most enthralling of virtual experiences. Indeed, it's only the proximity of serious injury that makes the actual activity exciting.

The realism of *Screamer 4x4* can't be faulted though, and in the first-person view, it's as close as you're likely to get without paying a visit to Silverstone, or taking an impromptu detour from the school run.
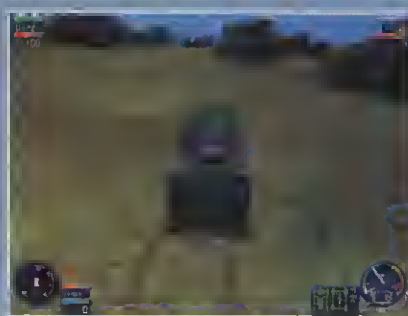
At least there's no chance of getting your feet wet.

ONLINEZONE

PC GAMING FOR THE MASSES

www.pczone.co.uk **#7 OCT 2001**

JUMPGATE

Elite for the online generation? Judge for yourself – full version on the CD

DIABLO II: LORD OF DESTRUCTION
Played the way it's meant to be played

THE OPERA
John Woo-inspired action for Half-Life

PAINKEEP ARENA
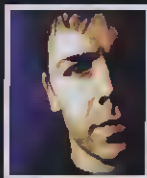Quake III has never been so much fun

ANARCHY ONLINE
First impressions of the biggest online RPG of the year

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE

I have three online games on the go at the moment, and to be honest, I can't really cope with the demands of all of them. I say on the go, but the truth is that I haven't really progressed past the installation stage. *Anarchy Online*, having dabbled with, enjoyed and been overwhelmed by both in a positive and negative way during the recent beta testing stage, is one I'd really like to get into. But it takes up so much time that I'm having trouble finding the hours to get back into my other current fave, *Jumpgate*. In third place comes *Fighting Legends*, a cartoon-style mix of role-playing and real-time strategy. Thankfully, the beta disc that arrived on my desk refuses to install, so I have a bit of time there.

Like trying to cook a decent roast dinner on a burning candle, juggling three persistent world games at once is something the human body just can't deal with. Good online RPGs can't be completed in a few days. In the case of *AO*, the game is set up to run for four years, perhaps longer. Stay out of its sci-fi world for a couple of weeks and everything in your world could change.

Luckily you have a choice. *Neocron*, *Dark Age Of Camelot*, *Shadowbane*, and eventually *Star Wars Galaxies* are just a few on the way, but you'd be mad to get on board with all of them. Pick the one that fits your gaming style and stick with it, because once you're in, it's very difficult to enter another. You have been warned.

Richie Shoemaker
Online Editor

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HOW WE SCORE ONLINE GAMES

You'll notice our Online scores are out of five. This is partly to avoid confusion with scores in the main *PC ZONE* reviews section and partly so we don't have to decide between giving a mod 63 or 64 per cent, plus it looks nice. Five stars means great, and one doesn't. It's pretty simple really.

PCZVERDICT
★★★★★ Excellent
★★★★★ Very good
★★★★★ Decent
★★★★★ Not bad
★★★★★ Bad
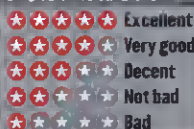
LASER SQUAD NEMESIS

First look at the online remake of a Gollop classic

Rejoice, for Codo Games has released an early tantalising glimpse of *Laser Squad Nemesis*, the online remix of the '80s turn-based tactical game *Laser Squad*. Codo, previously known as Mythos (*X-Com* series, *Magic & Mayhem*) and before that responsible for the original game, recently had to shut down development on the promising *Freedom Ridge* due to lack of funding, after seeing a succession of publishers practically destroy the once great *X-Com* name.

Heading for a brighter future thankfully is the new incarnation of *Laser Squad*, a multiplayer-only turn-based game played out between two sides (Space Marines, Spawn or Mechanoids). Players email their turns to a central server, after which turns are worked out and the combatants allowed to watch the action unfold in real time. Players will also be able to go back and watch the whole game in VCR mode, or indeed, preview their next move.

Able to spend points on choosing from a variety of units and equipment, players will then fight across isometric 3D maps, randomly generated depending on the environment selected. Each character class will offer different skills to the player, with a wealth of simple movement and combat options. And before anyone asks, it seems that the maps will indeed allow for plenty of explosions and building damage. Visit www.lasersquadnemesis.com for the latest.

Nemesis will make full use of 3D graphics cards.

DARK TIMES AHEAD FOR ASHERON'S CALL

Urban renewal for Turbine's MMORPG

Shown at E3, Turbine Entertainment has finally gotten round to announcing their expansion pack for *Asheron's Call*, the 'third-place' online RPG that was published last year by Microsoft.

Called *Dark Majesty*, the expansion will be released – in the US at least – at a competitive price and will not require you to own the original *Asheron's Call* – unlike all the *EverQuest* add-ons to date. Of course, if you stick with your copy of *Asheron's Call*, you won't have access to all the shiny new features that are planned, the main one being that players will now be able to own houses and store items within. Plus there will be a new landmass offering many new adventures and quests, new creatures, items and spells.

A release is planned for the end of the year. Visit http://www.microsoft.com/games/zone/asheronscall/dark_majesty.asp for all the info.
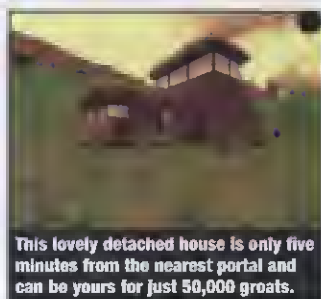
This lovely detached house is only five minutes from the nearest portal and can be yours for just 50,000 groats.

If it all looks this good we're in for o treat.

An oblique shot at Nintendo's *Pikmin...*?

Real-time bottles – a first for *Final Fantasy*.

FANTASY STARTS ONLINE

FFXI is coming to the PC

Forget your *Baldur's Gate* and your *Deus Ex*, *Final Fantasy* is the world's most popular RPG series. It's set to go online with *Final Fantasy XI*, now confirmed for a simultaneous release on PC and PS2 some time next year, with untold other console ports to follow. The massively multiplayer title from SquareSoft (www.squaresoft.com) will be a subscription-based RPG played concurrently across PC and console platforms, and promises to take online role-players to a new level of interactive narrativity.

The first real look at the game's visual style surfaced recently in the form of a short trailer released with the Japanese version of *Final Fantasy X*, and shows a marked departure from anything seen in the series before. While gameplay details remain scarce, the look of the game is clearly much darker and more Westernised than recent *FF* games, with traditional dragons, elves, and facial fungus in full bloom. The trailer shows some rather empty-looking desert and tundra environments, with only the forested sections looking particularly impressive. The character models and monsters, on the other hand, are looking spectacularly detailed, and there is at least some comfort for fans of the series with a display of some typically Square-looking magical pyrotechnics in the real-time combat sequences.

Series creator Hironobu Sakaguchi claims that *Final Fantasy XI* will signal the next evolution in online gaming, providing a more solid narrative for players to interact with and within. "Now, when people go online the individual characters interact and create their own story. The next step would be to have them interact within this general historical background and have plots that sweep through the entire gameworld... This is what we're trying to do with *Final Fantasy XI*."

ALL HAIL THE NEW SOVEREIGN

Verant's online RTS on a new heading

In all honesty it wasn't looking that good. When we spoke to a Verant representative at last year's E3 about their contemporary online RTS *Sovereign*, we came away with far more questions than answers. Decent graphics and good ideas, but it just hadn't really been thought through.

Stripped down and rebuilt, the new-look *Sovereign* is a much better proposition. Visibly a much more traditional RTS offering far more detailed graphics, the game has taken on board a heavy sci-fi appearance, with players now fighting across whole systems rather than single planets. Each gamer is in charge of a homeworld that's immune to attack from other players, though vulnerable to sabotage and galactic spies.

We'll bring you more information as we get it. For now, check out http://sovereign. station.sony.com.

Win over entire planets against dozens of players.

The planetscape view is still in evidence.

Sovereign has certainly brightened itself up a bit.

SHATTERED GALAXY

Role-playing strategy in sci-fi world gone mad

Real-time strategy games boasting role-playing elements have amounted to little in the past and even Blizzard's *WarCraft III*, for so long proclaimed as the world's 'first role-playing strategy game', seems now to have been clipped back in its ambitions.

For Nexon's online sci-fi strategy game *Shattered Galaxy*, however, the term role-playing strategy has never been more appropriate. Throughout the game you take on the role of a commander of a small group of forces, typically less than 12, with the aim of taking as much territory as possible. Pretty small-scale stuff, until you realise that with so few units at your disposal, help is needed from other players.

Although your character is never on the field of battle, your commander will progress through certain skill levels depending on whether you choose to specialise in certain types of tactical roles. You can for instance solely train through the ranks as an artillery specialist and support your allies, or prefer to become a jack of all trades and fight small-scale battles on your own.

Set across a number of varied planets, *Shattered Galaxy* features 24 factions and, though there are only a handful of units you can control yourself, hundreds may fight across a single map. With many hundreds of add-ons and upgrades – aside from RPG-style skills and statistics – from which you can upgrade your troops, *Shattered Galaxy* has the potential to become the biggest online strategy game to date.

We'll be reviewing *Shattered Galaxy* next issue, meanwhile get your fill at www.sgalaxy.com.

Research into new equipment for your units.

The world will kneel before you. Eventually.

Shattered Galaxy's teamwork depends on players sticking to a simple political framework set within each faction.

ALLEGIANCE SET FREE

Fight for freedom

Microsoft has announced that ongoing development on its online space sim *Allegiance* is to end with the next released patch. The game will be moved to MSN's Free Zone (http://zone.msn.com/allegiance) where owners of the game will be able to continue playing for free, from the game Premium price of US$9.99 per month.

Released early last year to mild critical acclaim, *Allegiance* was the first dedicated online space sim and though rather tricky to get to grips with, we rather liked it. So, if any space combat fans see the game languishing in the bargain bin of their local software retailer, they would do well to pick up a copy. You can read all about *Allegiance* at www.microsoft.com/games/allegiance.

Even better to share when it's free.

"Look, this fork's filthy!"
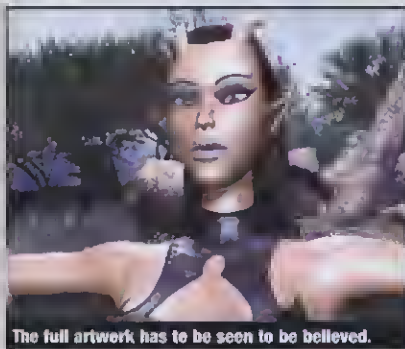
The full artwork has to be seen to be believed.

A fairly rude rock formation.

GODS AND MONSTERS

Chaos strikes back in *DuelField*

In development by French outfit Sismoplay is the online strategy game *DuelField* (www.duelfield.net), which, if anyone cares or remembers, reminds us of the Spectrum classic from 1983, *Chaos*.

In *DuelField* players assume the role of gods, where the aim is to defeat any other deity who cares to take you on across a magical battlefield known as – wait for it – The Field. Hence *DuelField*. Clever, eh.

Anyway... Rather than get your lovely white locks and fluffy white beard caked in blood, in *Duelfield* you'll be able to summon all manner of magical fantasy creatures to do battle on your behalf, from such beardy staples as trolls and goblins to Nautylians and Keepers. As a god we can also expect to be able to cast all manner of spells. As they survive the battles, each will gain new skills and experience, even changing in look, the aim being that players will be able to trade or auction their creatures over the Net.

We're informed that the game could well be released by the end of the year, though with beta testing yet to start, that seems unlikely.

MODWATCH

Tony Lamb does the rounds for what's up and coming in the mod scene

Great news for *Half-Life* fans with the release of *Front Line Force v1.3a* and no less than two map packs to go with it. We first looked at *FLF* nearly nine months ago when we took our hats off to anyone brave enough to make a *Counter-Strike* clone for *Half-Life* itself – especially when the mod was so good. *FLF 1.3* has a number of bug fixes and weapon tweaks, and the map packs have five all-new levels as well as a 'classic' set of seven older but not previously released killing grounds. Get the latest files at www.flfmod.com.

Impressive-looking upcoming *Quake III* mod *Navy Seals* is moving closer to a beta release with another new map appearing on the mod's website. Sadly there are no downloadable program files yet (and no advised beta date, more's the pity), but the maps, weapon renderings, and skins all look pretty convincing so far. If you fancy yourself as a gung-ho US secret-squirrel type, then head over to www.ns-co.net for more details.

The Team at *Tactical Ops* are certainly keeping themselves busy and have now released Beta 2 of their great realism mod for *Unreal Tournament*. This is definitely a mod well worth installing, and this update adds seven new weapons, some highly anticipated new maps, smoke grenades and much more. It's a huge file, 104Mb, which is why we put it on the CD. Head over to www.tactical-ops.net to find out more.

As if men didn't have enough problems, now we've brought the eternal squabble onto our PCs too. *Battle Of The Sexes* for *Quake III* is essentially a Capture The Flag scenario, but with one team taking the role of the chaps while the girlies try to kick their butts around the game. No change there then. Find out more at www.captured.com/bots.

Finally, a preview version of *Real Tournament* has hit the Net (www.planetunreal.com/realtournament), presenting *UT* fans with a single-player ladder contest (just like the original game) with no less than 11 Deathmatch maps, three Capture The Flag and three Domination maps to fight their way around. Having started back in the dark days of *Unreal* before it became a classic game in the guise of *Unreal Tournament*, *RT* was originally envisaged as a Capture The Flag add-on for *Unreal* itself. It never made a commercial release but thankfully the development team kept working on it and *UT* fans everywhere should thank whatever God they pray to for that decision.

Apart from the new maps, *RT* has a load of other stuff: fantastic textures, great-looking skins, relics that act as power-ups to your weapons, health and armour, a protective helmet to reduce the chances of headshot kills, the option to score points based on damage caused rather than kills, four game types (DM, Team DM, CTF and DOM), great sounds, classic *UT* atmosphere and much, much more. It's great already, but when it's finished it'll be a real beauty. In fact, I'm off to play it.

Welcome to the planet Rubi-Ka.

The Prodigy return.
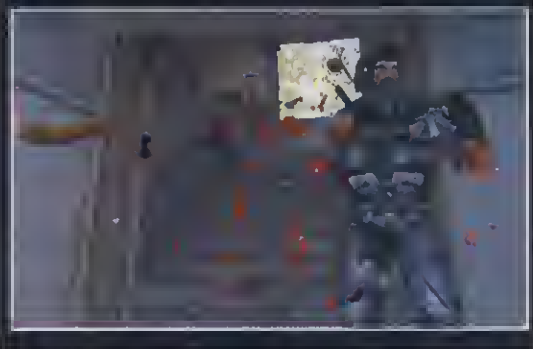
Check out the people standing still...

ANARCHY ONLINE

UPDATE

Funcom's ground-breaking role-player has finally gone live. Can it compete with the big boys? *Chris Anderson* checks out *AO*'s first week online and finds more questions than answers

Let's be honest. Nobody expected *Anarchy Online*'s launch to go smoothly. Traditionally, online RPGs have been plagued with problems of enormous magnitude in the first couple of months of release, and in some cases, way beyond that. *Ultima Online* was almost unplayable when it was first released, with huge lag problems and bugs of all shapes and sizes. *EverQuest* was similar (even two years down the line, Verant is still 'fixing' things that should have been addressed before launch).

In light of this, the furore surrounding *Anarchy Online*'s release is understandable yet predictable. Yes, there are bugs, and plenty of them, but unlike *Ultima Online*'s early days, *AO* offers an experience which looks promising, despite the problems in one very important area (see the Freeze boxout).

To give you some idea of the magnitude of the problems facing *AO*, Funcom extended the period of 'free' time in the game to many subscribers, as it felt the product it had released was not sufficiently playable to warrant taking cash from its customers. While this is commendable, the mind boggles as to why it didn't just hold the release and fix the problems. It's not as if Funcom didn't know the problems existed. The *Anarchy Online* website turned into nothing more than a huge flame war between Funcom and hugely disgruntled subscribers.

However, the game has gone live, and having played it extensively for the last couple of weeks, I can confidently report that it has more innovative and ground-breaking ideas than *Ultima Online*, *EverQuest* and *Asheron's Call* put together.

ANYTHING YOU CAN DO...

It is obvious Funcom has taken note of the many shortcomings in its competitors' products and addressed all of them with its own title. The premise of the game is not unique (create a character in a futuristic environment and fight monsters to gain experience with increasingly impressive armour and weapons as you progress through the game), but it's in the execution of the game that Funcom has truly excelled. Teaming up with other players around the world is easily achieved, and

communicating with group members and distributing the loot earned through battles is simplicity itself. The arguing between group members over who gets what loot that is noticeable in *EverQuest* is eradicated in *AO* through a command that forces team members to take turns looting dead enemies. The chat system is superb.

At a click of a button you can switch from chatting to people in your team to a channel exclusively for other people who are looking for people to team with. There's also a 'shopping' system where people buy and sell and initially, a 'newbie' channel where people who have just started playing the game can discuss their experiences and help each other through the early levels.

Perhaps the single most innovative feature in *Anarchy Online* is the way Funcom has gone about eliminating 'downtime' (time

despatching enemies as you go along), with basic mission goals (find an item, 'fix' something that's broken, assassinate someone and so on), but they go a long way to relieving the frustration of other games of this ilk when you literally can not find anything to do. *Anarchy Online* is designed from the ground up to be constantly playable and exciting, with a superb chat system and user interface making life as easy as it could possibly be.
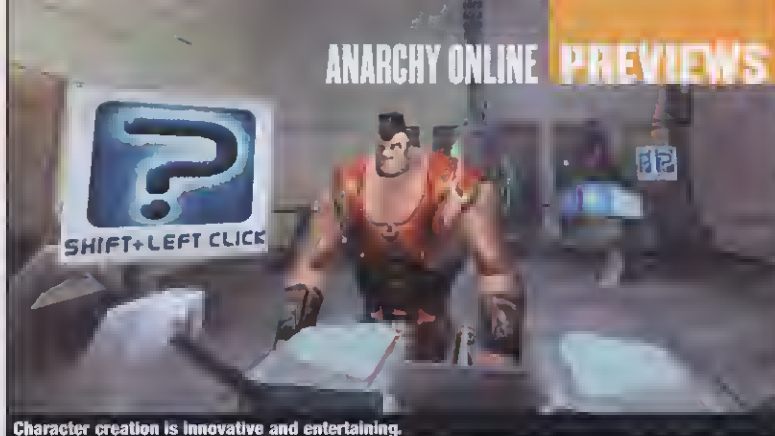
BETTER THAN THE REST?

You may be thinking at this point that *Anarchy Online* sounds too good to be true and is streets ahead of the competition. While in some respects this is true, in others it is prohibitively restrictive with many bugs hindering progress, and the now infamous lag problem making the game completely

Character creation is innovative and entertaining.

Very few beards in this game.

> ❝ **The now infamous lag problem makes the game completely unplayable at regular intervals** ❞

spent between battles waiting for mana to regenerate, or time spent simply with nothing to do because you can't find other people to group with). There is literally no downtime in *Anarchy Online*. You don't have to sit for ages in between battles waiting for your nano energy (mana) to refresh or your health to come back to full, because you can buy medical kits that refresh nano and health instantly. There is no downtime in between finding people to group with, because Funcom has introduced a mission generation system that gives random missions to players, which they can complete for experience and items. Admittedly, the missions are not particularly exciting. They are all similar in nature (travel through corridors

unplayable at regular intervals. In short, the game is by no means finished. It's due for a UK release in September, and we will bring you a full review of the game next month. In the meantime, however, consider yourself warned that as it stands, *Anarchy Online* is a hugely frustrating gaming experience, and we recommend strongly that you steer well clear of it for the time being. There is always a chance that Funcom will address the single biggest problem (lag) by the time you read these words. I suggest you go to an independent forum to find out if this is the case, and if it is, you can safely go ahead and purchase the game. Otherwise, wait until next month for our final word before you spend a penny of your hard-earned on it. **PCZ**

TASK BAR `? x`

FREEZE

Why *AO* is more like a game of Musical Statues

Anarchy Online has many bugs, but they do not make the game unplayable. However, the unbelievable lag experienced when entering cities or other highly populated areas most certainly does. If you don't know what lag is, imagine playing *Quake III* on a P75, and then imagine the kind of frame-rate you can expect. The world stands still, you jerk in slow motion and you suddenly find yourself facing completely the wrong direction while your machine struggles desperately to catch up with the information being sent to it by the game's server. It is not my idea of fun,

and I am sure it won't be yours either. While the problem gets much worse at peak hours, even off-peak there are enough people online to reduce your bandwidth to a point where your frame-rate drops to zero and the screen literally freezes for minutes at a time while your Internet connection does its level best to keep you up to date with what's happening in the game. No matter how fast your machine, how good your graphics card, how much RAM you've got, or how fast your Internet connection is. At the time of writing new servers were being set up – we'll keep you posted.
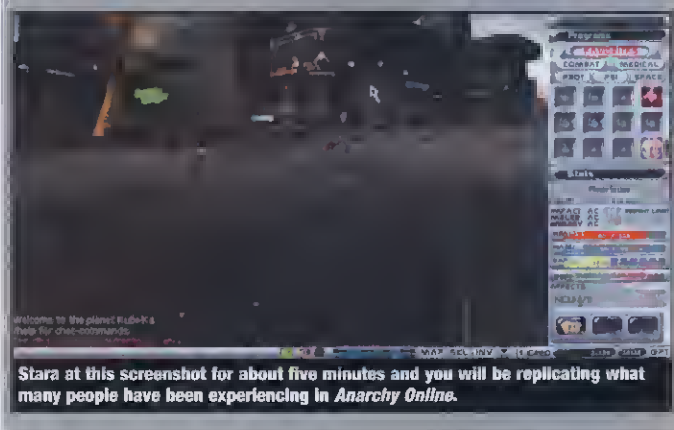
Stara at this screenshot for about five minutes and you will be replicating what many people have been experiencing in *Anarchy Online*.
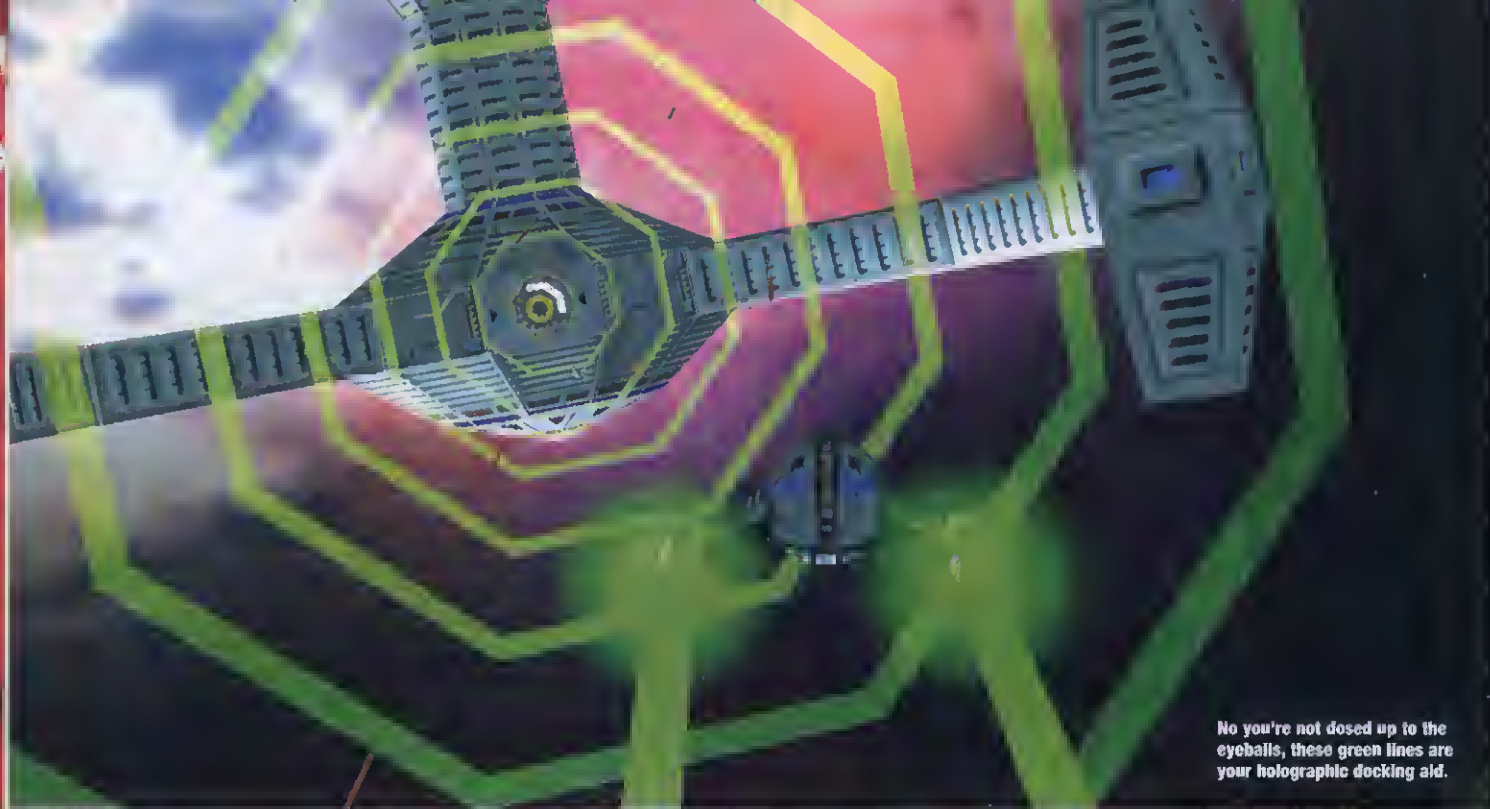
No you're not dosed up to the eyeballs, these green lines are your holographic docking aid.

JUMPGATE

⊙ £6.20 per month/£14.25 per quarter • Netdevil/Mightygames • Out now • www.mightygames.co.uk

Online gaming just took a giant leap into space. We sent *Chris Anderson* to look for it

ON THE CD

As online gaming continues to attract increasingly bigger audiences, developers are exploring new genres in the hope of wresting the attention of the online community from the big boys – namely EA, Microsoft and Verant, with *Ultima Online*, *Asheron's Call*, and *EverQuest* respectively.

Netdevil is the latest arrival on the scene with *Jumpgate*, a game that roughly equates to *Elite Online*, except without the huge diversity of futuristic locales and planets that populated David Braben's original classic. For space combat fans with a fast Internet connection, *Jumpgate* must

sound like a dream come true. A whole universe to explore online, including trading and fighting with other players, exploring deep space and forming allegiances around the world, and of course, kicking the shit out of them. It's an enticing prospect, and one we wasted no time in investigating.

Jumpgate has only been live for a matter of weeks but already their servers are heavily populated with enthusiastic space pilots. We decided to join them to see what all the fuss was about. This is what we found.

HELP, I'M NEW HERE

First impressions of any online RPG are important. While experienced online gamers will persevere through the most unfriendly interface and the most complex and unhelpful 'newbie' induction process just to see if the game is really worth their time when they

eventually find out what it's all about, newcomers to online gaming will run a thousand miles it they are left staring stupidly at the screen without any clue whaf fo do when the game loads up. The first screen you will see when you arrive in *Jumpgate* is about as self-explanatory as it could possibly be. You find yourself at a space station where you can

configure your ship, buy and sell equipment, take on missions, or jump into a simulator and learn how to fly the ship you start with. Everything's clearly labelled, and if should be obvious to mosf people exactly what it is they are looking at. However, knowing which missions are best to take on at the start,

or whether it was worth upgrading my ship with my initial credits, was another matter entirely. I decided to ask someone. At the top of the screen there is a rectangular box where you can see what people are saying on the chat channel. There were a lot ot people on at the time, but I had no clue whatsoever what any of them were saying. They

> ## "I typed in 'Does anyone here speak English?' There were several replies, all in German except one, which said 'no'"

were all speaking German. No help there then. I typed in 'Does anyone here speak English?' There were several replies, all In German except one, which simply said 'no'. I remembered reading on the *Jumpgate* site thaf pressing F5 would bring me to the 'newbie' channel where someone would help. I pressed F5 and tound more
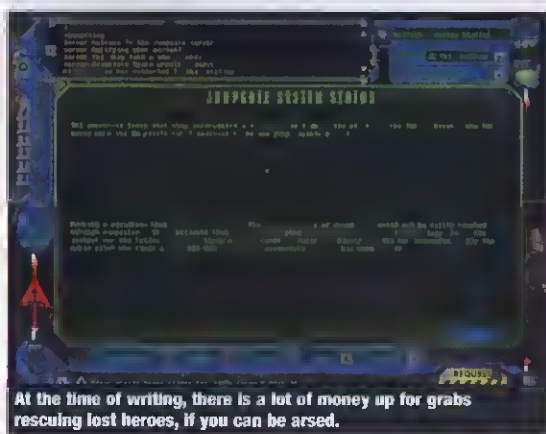
At the time of writing, there is a lot of money up for grabs rescuing lost heroes, if you can be arsed.

Play your cards right and you could own a ship like this.
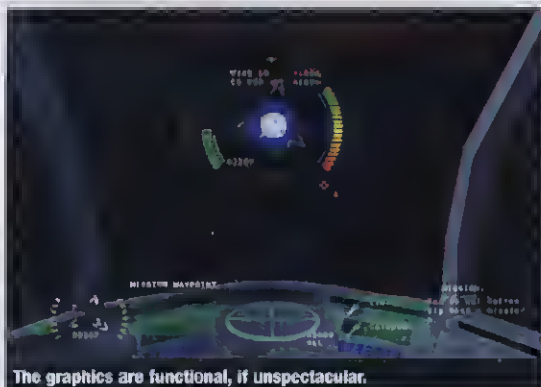
Planet Eart is blue...

Each faction's ships and stations have their own look and style.
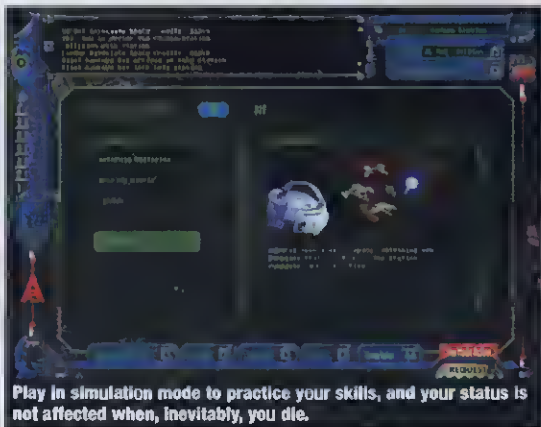
The graphics are functional, if unspectacular.

people babbling away, again in German. I typed 'Am I the only English-speaking person here?' Back came the reply 'type :eng'. I did as instructed and lo and behold, the English-speaking channel came to lite. This is not a huge problem, I found my way there eventually, but I later found people in the game who didn't know this command existed, and as a result played a fair way Into it cut off from people who spoke in their native tongue. Netdevil take note: ask people their language preference *before* they start the game, instead ot leaving them to find out for themselves where they're meant to go to find people who speak their language. A row ot buttons with a choice ot language tor chat channels would do the trick.

IT GETS BETTER

There were plenty of people on the chat channel. They seemed like a friendly bunch. I asked a few questions, mainly advice

Play in simulation mode to practice your skills, and your status is not affected when, inevitably, you die.

MONEY FOR OLD ROPE

First steps in Jumpgate

Jumpgate's rookie pilots are basically delivery boys, jumping from one sector to another dropping off goods to make some cash. Faction missions provide light relief from the tedium of messenger duties, and they go something... like... this...

Choose your mission at a space station. This one asks you to check out a few beacons in various sectors. That'll do.
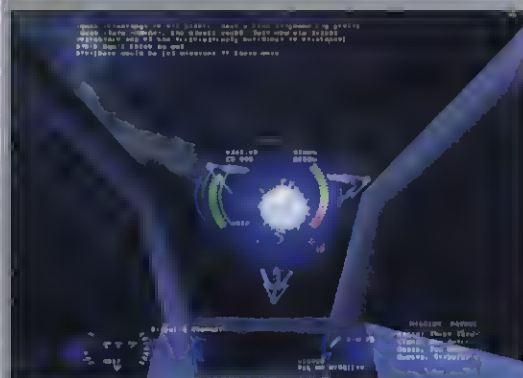
To get to your waypoint sector, you need to use jumpgates, just like the one straight ahead.
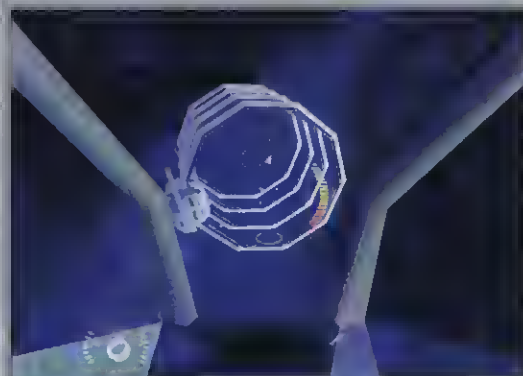
This is a beacon. They are scattered around various sectors. Fly through them all, then return to base for your cash. It really is that simple.

It's a space combat sim, so obviously it has asteroid belts. Here's one I literally bumped into earlier.

Customise your ship on the ship configuration screen.

on how to get started and which missions I should try first. There was a system OP on the chat channel at the time. These people are Netdevil officials who are there to help new players with problems and queries. The OP sent me a message asking me what I needed help with, and gave me advice on the do's and don'ts for starter pilots. Well, this is a first. If you've

ever played *EverQuest* or *Ultima Online* you will know what a nightmare it is trying to get hold of one of these people if you ever have a problem in-game. In *Jumpgate*, they're just sitting there in the chat room helping players out. This is absolutely the way forward for online multiplayer RPGs, and I expect *Jumpgate* will retain more novice and casual gamers than its competition

for this reason alone, and deservedly so.

Onward to the mission screen, where an impressive array of mission types lay waiting. Transport missions (take an item to a destination for a financial reward), combat missions (kill something), escort missions, faction runs, there was a lot to choose from, which is a good thing as at the beginning of the game

missions are your only means of earning credits.

Completing missions in *Jumpgate* achieves two goals: you get financial recompense which you can use to buy better equipment for your ship (or even a new ship if you get rich enough), and you get experience points. Experience points accumulate and you eventually go up in level when you reach the required amount

of points to progress. There's nothing unusual about that in an RPG, but what *is* unusual is what happens to you when you die. Unlike most of its rivals, which punish death by taking away a set amount of your experience (thus hindering your progress to the next level), in *Jumpgate* you keep all the experience points you've gained, but you lose your ship and everything that it was equipped with too. Whether this is a good thing or a bad thing depends largely on what matters most to you. At higher levels, experience takes much longer to accumulate, so if you're a power-gamer who wants to get to level 50 as fast as possible, then keeping your experience points is a good thing. On the other hand, if your goal is to get the best ships and weapons in the game, you won't be too happy when you lose the lot because you accidentally crashed into a space station and got yourself killed when the phone rang. It won't really be apparent how people are going to take to this method of penalising death until many of the players in the game reach high levels and suffer huge losses when they meet their maker, but if we hear of anyone topping themselves because they got blown up and lost those nifty weapons it took them six weeks to save up for, you'll be the first to know.

WORLD ALMOST AT WAR

Three sides to every war

There are three main factions in *Jumpgate*. The inhabitants of Solrain, Octavius and Quantar each have their own distinctive ships, weaponry and style of playing. You get to choose one of these factions when you start the game. The Solrain are master traders, the Octavians are basically out to kill everything, and the Quantar thrive on mining. *Jumpgate* features an ongoing storyline (which has yet to unfold) but you can bet that it will involve a massive fallout at some

point between these three factions. The current peaceful state in which they all coexist will be torn apart as players from rival factions go for each others' throats at every opportunity (well, at least that's what *should* happen as far as we're concerned). This is when *Jumpgate* will come alive and become more of an experience than a simple game. We'll be keeping an eye on the situation, and giving you an update on how things are progressing in a future issue.

The Quantar monopolise mining supplies.
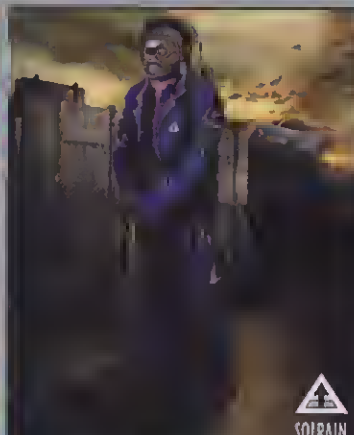
The Solrain are master traders.

The Octavians are master killers.

THE MONEY GAME

Controversial death penalty aside, *Jumpgate* is pretty much

Looks like I lost then.

Usa this handy map to make your way round tha star system.

exactly what you would expect it to be. It's all about earning money and buying bigger and better ships, weapons and items. There are lots of ways you can do this, but in the beginning you'll be doing transport or faction missions just to get some coin to upgrade your ship, and I would be lying if I didn't say they get repetitive, and fast. The lower level game in *Jumpgate* is very tedious, particularly in comparison to other online RPGs. The bad news is you can expect to put in about 30 hours of game time before you get to do something a bit more interesting (ie killing stuff). The good news is once you level your character to a reasonable degree (level eight and up), the

game gets a lot more exciting. With a half-decent ship and good weapons, you can enter into combat with alien NPCs (the Conflux) with confidence, and take on more challenging missions. You are also in a position at this point to enter into player-versus-player combat with members of other factions in the game.

Jumpgate is not the most original game in the world. It does exactly what it says on the tin, and while it's addictive it doesn't promote mindless levelling. It's still quite possible to pop in and out of it for an hour at a time however and feel like you've achieved something. It remains to be seen how much Impact the ongoing storyline will have on the game universe

and how it will affect the game (see World Almost At War panel), but as it stands it's still a highly entertaining online space combat sim with an excellent player community and a customer service system that is second to none. [PCZ]

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Immersive online space combat and trading • Great player community and customer service • No lag • Good value

DOWNERS Archaic chat interface • Low-level game is repetitive • Graphically inferior to the new breed of online RPGs

★★★★☆

Elite Online, well almost

It's almost *Elite Online*, almost.

TALK EASY

Meeting peopie isn't easy

Jumpgate's chat system is a little strange, to say the least. Having seen *Anarchy Online*'s revolutionary chat system, it came as something ot a shock to discover we had to use tunction keys to switch between chat channels, and type convoluted commands to send personal messages to other players that nobody else could hear. It's often difficult to remember which chat channel you are on (there is no visual representation of the mode you are in), and while it's fair to say that you get used to all this atter a while, it still teels cumbersome. Given that *Jumpgate* is a persistent ongoing universe, and as such is prone to major changes through its history, I would suggest that Netdevil put the chat interface at the top ot their list tor potentiat Improvements.

Jumpgate's chat interface is functional, if a little cumbersome.

DIABLO II: LORD OF DESTRUCTION

⭐ £19.99 • Vivendi • Out now

Party up and share the experience.

More kick-ass weapons mean bigger and better stats.

The best time to jump on the European servers is between 6pm and 7pm UK time.

Rhianna Pratchett **goes online for some** *Diablo II*-**style destruction**

It's probably fair to say that Blizzard has encouraged *Diablo II* fans to buy the expansion pack, *Lord Of Destruction*, in the same kind of way Don Corleone encourages loyalty. The character skill and spell modifications imposed on the online community in their last few patches have meant many players have found their elite characters dampened and have been 'persuaded' to buy the expansion pack to play through the higher nightmare and hell modes and pick up some new weapons to try and regain their status. Blizzard need not have been quite so militant because *Lord Of Destruction* is good enough to have sold itself, but you can't help but have respect for that kind of sneakiness.

This has obviously worked, as the two new characters are proving immensely popular, and have boosted battlenet's already healthy attendance. The assassin has proved particularly tasty, as she employs the traits of most of the other characters, plus her own unique charge-up skills. The druid works in a similar way to the necromancer, but instead of summoning skeletons he summons wolves, bears and poisonous vines to his side. It tweaking the sorceress's spell-casting speed helped combat the ever-present problem of online lag, then this guy makes up for it.

A CHANGE OF FACE

What makes this expansion pack good value, is that by making-over the original

> **"Blizzard has cleared things up since we last reviewed *Diablo II* online"**

For those not so familiar with the *Diablo* world, *Lord Of Destruction* contains two new characters, the druid and the assassin, a fifth act that picks up from the end of *Diablo II*, two combat sets, plus a host of new weapons and items such as runes and jewels. Among some of the most notable 'tweaks' is the increase in damage of the Amazon's strafe arrow and the reduction in damage of her multi-arrow, which has meant a few pissed off Amazons who have previously poured all their skill points into multi-arrow.

A BIT OF A TWEAK

There has also been a reduction in the amount leeching weapons leech, and the whirlwind skill of the Barbarian is now dependent on the speed of their weapon, rather than the standard whirlwind speed. Blizzard seems to be trying to create a level playing field to incorporate the new characters or it could be just a way of getting players to abandon their grip on the original five to give the two new ones a going over.

characters, it changes the way the original game is played. Although the fifth act is sadly rather short when compared to the previous four, the enhanced difficulty levels, new weapons and rune words, have kept the trade channels buzzing, and you can't build a superior online character unless you jump in and show off the colour of your money. Blizzard has cleared things up since we last saw *Diablo II* online, the play is quite smooth even on a 56K modem, although there's lag with larger games. *Lord Of Destruction* is a good package for newbies and veterans alike. **PCZ**

PCZVERDICT ✓

⬆ **UPPERS** Great value for money • Extends the longevity of the original characters • New characters are great fun

⬇ **DOWNERS** Fifth act is too short • Players may find character changes infuriating • Tendency to lag with larger games

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐

Eminently worthwhile

The Norns' spacecraft contains many weird machines to fiddle around with.

When a creature is sent to you from another player make sure you scan for diseases.

CREATURES INTERNET EDITION

£19.99 • FastTrak • Out now

Keith Pullin gives birth to a sickly litter of aliens. And he didn't even know he was pregnant

After five days of near solid play on *Creatures Internet Edition* the thought 'what is the point of this game?' will have crossed your mind at least 100 times. But then maybe it's just me. Maybe I just don't know how to have fun without hurting people...

Computer games really don't get any less rewarding than this; you raise a few Norns, you exchange them with other players over the Internet and then you do it again and again and again. If you've played any of the *Creatures* games before and have been dreaming of the day when you could display your alien genetic engineering skills to the rest of the world, *CIE* may well represent the pinnacle of your existence. But that's always been the thing about *Creatures*. It isn't really a game, more of a toy, a cute way of dressing up genetic engineering as some sort of virtual Lego set.

YAWN...
The concept of non-linear, open-ended gameplay has been taken to such extremes the end product is more of a utility than a game. But even that definition would be misleading; most utility forums or websites have dozens of users chatting away about the best way to use their gadgets. The sad existence of a Norn breeder is nowhere near as social, informative or dare I say it – exciting.

It's easy to see where the designers were heading though. Essentially what we have here is *Black & White* without the flashy graphics and gameplay. The trouble is, where *Black & White* had an entire strategy and role-playing game built around its parenting escapades, *CIE* relies entirely on the nurturing and teaching side of things. There are no missions, no primary goals, no secondary goals – and no goals final. There's just a large spaceship, with a few areas like the desert, jungle and workshop inhabited by lots of creatures that spend their time walking

> **"The female Norn warped onto my spaceship was sickly Day-Glo yellow and her eggs all rotted before hatching"**

and squeaking at each other. Let's face it: how dull is that?

RETURN TO SENDER
During my five days of hell I came across just four people. Of these none exchanged pleasantries and only two were prepared to exchange Norns. Even then, the female Norn called Magina who was warped onto my spaceship was a kind of sickly Day-Glo yellow in appearance whose eggs all rotted before hatching.

The only pleasure gained from this pathetic excuse for a creature was when I beamed poor Magina back to her distraught owner riddled with disease and dying from hypothermia. No question about it; you have to say the

community spirit in the Docking Station is most definitely lacking – especially with people like me around.

CHECK OUT THE PAINT DRYING
Ultimately, it's difficult to see where the long-term excitement lies with this game. If you're used to more competitive online forays with the likes of *Quake, Counter-Strike* or *Black & White*, *Creatures Internet Edition*'s passive style will doubtless send you into a coma within seconds. As a *Creatures* fan, you may feel it more productive to stay offline, unless you've got some friends to babysit your creatures with. *CIE* is for *Creatures* and hardcore Tamagotchi fans and if you're not one of those I wouldn't bother. PCZ

Aaahhhh! Little Knosh Pigs comes of age.

PCZ VERDICT ✓

↑ **UPPERS** Almost infinite amount of creatures to be created • Largish play area with plenty of zones

↓ **DOWNERS** • Very few people online • Not really a game

★★☆☆☆

One for die-hard fans only

Superb level design and loads of custom textures.

Oh how I laughed, until I got sucked in as well.

Coma to papa.

PAINKEEP ARENA V2.6

Requires full version of *Quake III Arena* • Team Evolve • www.teamevolve.com

Anthony 'Beartrap' Holden's days of insubordination may be at an end

Ever since we tired of our daily *Counter-Strike* sessions and revived *Quake III* as the lunchtime tragfest of choice, the *ZONE* office has become a much nastier and more spiteful place. Without the shared responsibility and diluted ego investment of *C-S*'s squad-based action, our pleasant lunchtime game sessions have descended into a fiercely competitive and incredibly childish spectacle of bad sportsmanship.

BEARING IT ALL

Bitter name-calling, trash talk, hissy fits and broken hardware are only a few of the everyday occurrences, and that's just before the first restart. What a relief, then, when we loaded up the new version of *Painkeep Arena* and found ourselves actually laughing over *Quake III* again, and not even in a vindictive and malicious way either. This latest version of the classic *Painkeep* continues where the original *Quake* mod left off, putting fun and humour back into the ultimate deathmatching game and reviving *PC ZONE*'s caring, sharing spirit in the process.

The first, if most obvious, moment of humour comes when you pick up a can of pork and beans, a risky kind of health bonus that gives you sufficient flatulence to get airborne, but only randomly and to the tune of some worryingly moist sound effects. While the novelty of this item soon wears thin, a more lasting and violent source of humour soon arrives in the form of the beartrap. There's few gaming joys that come close to dropping one of these nasty surprises in a dark corridor and waiting for the inevitable snap as an enemy leg steps into its jaws. Until, of course, you discover that you can drop them directly onto someone in a close firefight, and even launch them at people with the aid of the grappling hook. Fantastic stuff.

WEAPONS GALORE

The fun doesn't end there though, with other familiar but appealing items such as autosentry guns, the gravity well and the aforementioned grappling hook also making an appearance. A gleeful scattering of *Quake*-standard power-ups like Haste, Regen and Flight runes, hypodermic medkits, invisibility and the Quad also

> **"A can of pork and beans gives you sufficient flatulence to get airborne"**

add to the unbridled insanity of the gameplay. Weapon selection isn't neglected either, with a redesigned nailgun, lock-on lightning gun and the excellent airfist, which you can use to blow people and items around the level, repel oncoming rockets or do air jumps. Indeed, there are often so many booby traps to avoid, items to pick up and bizarre weapons to employ that the game becomes more like a frenetic *Spy Vs Spy* homage than a traditional deathmatch.

To top it off, all of the 21 levels that come with the mod are excellently designed, with features such as safe spawn points and clever use of jump pads giving the maps an assured and professional feel. A selection of refreshing new sound effects also help to differentiate the mod from its host game, and while we would have liked to have seen more than the two new character models on offer, it's otherwise difficult to fault what is an outstanding deathmatch mod. Pity then that there were only nine public servers hosting *PK Arena* when we last checked, and most of those were empty. The fact that the *ZONE* editorial team no longer want to kill each other every lunchtime should be argument enough to give this one a crack.

THE OPERA

Requires full version of *Half-Life* • The Redeemed Assassins Team • http://opera.redeemedsoft.com/

Expecting a bunch of warbling Germanic bloaters in Viking helmets, *Anthony Holden* was to be disappointed yet again

Curiously cyclical in nature, the Hong Kong film industry's been in a bit of a slump for a while, but in its most recent round of glory days managed to produce some of the greatest and most inventive action films of all time. Among the most celebrated films of this period are those known as Heroic Bloodshed or Blood Opera films. Usually directed by John Woo and

DUCKIN' & DIVIN'

The Opera is a total *Half-Life* conversion that attempts to capture the spirit and stylish action aesthetic of these films by adding a host of new athletic feats and gameplay features to the standard FPS mix (homo-erotic subplots optional). Bind a few extra keys and all of a sudden you can dive, tumble, cartwheel, dodge and wall-spring around the familiar filmic locations like a hardened Triad

"You won't find any clumsy rocket launchers or impersonal sniper rifles"

starring Chow Yun Fat, films like *Hard-Boiled* and *A Better Tomorrow* were characterised by superbly choreographed and fantastically over the top gun battles, generally driven by a blossoming manly love between two men of honour, grown from the seed of a mutual, yet grudging, respect and expressed through the frenzied spillage of bodily fluids.

assassin, pistols akimbo, trench coat billowing in your wake. Instead of a straight frag count, success in *The Opera* is measured in dollar terms, with payment for each kill determined by the amount of style involved in its execution. Head shots, heart shots, diving, rolling or dodging kills are all rewarded accordingly, while graceless room-clearing will get

you nowhere. You won't find any clumsy rocket launchers or impersonal sniper rifles in *The Opera* either – it's all about the precision of a throwing knife, the ballet of a pistol duel, the spectacle of an uzi muzzle flash arcing across your screen. There are no damage or ammo counters, no health pick-ups and no power-ups of any sort. Instead you'll find an action meter that determines how many stunts you can pull off, and the choice of eight Disciplines at the start of every match, each giving you access to a different talent such as silence, speed, or a sixth sense.

READY... AIM...

While all this is very cool, it's also fraught with problems. All the stunts and fancy moves are great fun, but prove difficult to put into practice convincingly, the main problem being that you can't adjust your aim once a move is triggered. If you don't time your dive or roll precisely from the start, you'll more than likely shoot a lot of fresh air and end up lying on the floor looking like a dick. All the camera twists and rolls that accompany the

stunts are more than a little nauseating as well, something that is less apparent in the switchable third-person view, but this obviously brings all the usual shortcomings of aiming and moving in tight spaces. The level design and use of textures are also less than brilliant.
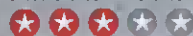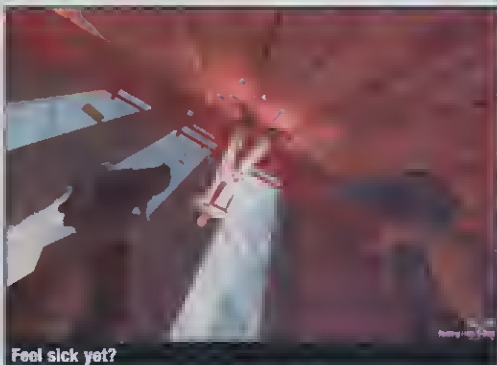
The Opera has already caused considerable buzz on the Net, with dozens of servers going up within days of the mod's launch. However, *Max Payne* has also come along and done some similar things in a more polished fashion, and while it's not a multiplayer thing,

Max may still steal some of *The Opera*'s thunder. With this in mind, there's a lot of work to be done if this mod is to become more than a passing distraction.

Not being able to aim mid-dive is a huge error.

PCZVERDICT

🔺 **UPPERS** Cool super-athletic gunplay • Captures the essence of HK action films

🔻 **DOWNERS** Flawed stunt system • Patchy level design • May cause sea-sickness

⭐⭐⭐☆☆

A nice idea that deserves more work

It all looks a bit silly in third-person.

Feel sick yet?

Moments like this make it all worthwhile.

READERS' FREE-FOR-ALL

Want to hack down Woods, walk all over Shoemaker or mow down Hill? *Martin Korda* tells you how

Last month we decided to throw down the gauntlet to you all, and challenge you and your mates, clan or even a group of you who don't like each other very much to a game of *Quake III* and *Quake III: Jail Break*. The challenges have been trickling in over the last couple of weeks, and by the time you read this we'll have chosen our opponents and blown them away with consummate ease, hopefully. Next month we'll be bringing you the result of the first *Quake III/Jeilbreek* challenge, regaling you with every gory detail, but until then we thought we'd talk about the Readers' Free-For-All for a change, which has been a huge success even though we've neglected it somewhat in these pages for the past few issues.

Since the first Free-For-All, the turnout has been superb. The events have always been a good laugh (as long as we're winning), with no one taking the whole thing too seriously (unless we're losing). There's never really been a feeling of us-against-you, which is why these evenings are always a laugh. The servers running from The Playing Fields have been superb with little or no lag, so no one can complain too much when they're killed. What's more, you get the opportunity to shoot us every month, so if your clan's challenge hasn't been accepted yet (we've had well over 200 just for *Counter-Strike* so far) then you can simply jump onto the free-for-all servers and try to prove you're better than us. Yeah, as if.

From now on, every month we're going to try and note down who performs particularly well during the Free-For-All,

end mention them in these pages. So if you think you're 'ard enough, come and have a go, and if you really are the bollocks and can actually find someone who's interested, you can gloat that you got mentioned as a Star Player of the Month in *PC ZONE*. Of course you have to get past us first. So you'd better get practising ladies...

FREE-FOR-ALL

Mon Sep 10, 2001

7:00 – 10:00pm

FREE-FOR-ALL

UNREAL TOURNAMENT/COUNTER-STRIKE

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Dave Woods	**KID UNKNOWN**
Richie Shoemaker	**ZAPATERO**
Martin Korda	**NAMELESS ONE**
Anthony Holden	**SHOKUPAN**
Colin Mackleworth	**M.A.C.H.I.N.E**
Rhianna Pratchett	**RAVEN**
David McCandless	**MAQUA**
Paul Presley	**I R BABOON**
Phil Clark	**SHITKICKER**
Mark Hill	**LEATHERFACE**

PC ZONE Free-For-All ? x

GETTING CONNECTED

Get ready for some hot fragging action

Not in the main challenge? You can still get your arses whipped by joining the Free-For-All. To join our *Unreal Tournament* server, click the 'Multiplayer' tab in the top-left menu and then select 'Open Location'. Type in '195.149.48.59:7777' in the box provided, hit enter and when prompted for e password, type in *pczone*.

To join the *Counter-Strike* FFA, from the opening *Counter-Strike* menu click 'Play CS' then 'Internet Games' and 'Filter'. Check the box for 'Are In My Favourites List' and uncheck the other boxes.

Now click 'Filter' again, and click 'Add Server' then type: '195.149.48.59:27016'. You should now see a server called 'PC ZONE Challenge' listed on your screen. Double click on this server to join it. The password is *pczone*.

Servers will be available for practice from 12noon. Maps will cycle every 15 minutes to allow everyone a chance to play, so keep trying. If you have any problems connecting, telephone 020 7388 0004 on the day of the challenge.

HAVE A GO ? x

PC ZONE GAME SERVERS

Provided by www.games-world.net

The *PC ZONE* game servers are now more popular than ever and to ensure only *PC ZONE* readers can play on them, we've decided to password them all. Don't worry though, every month we'll be printing the password you need to get fragging.

Quake III: Arena Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.24.27966
Quake III: Fortress Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.24.27968

Counter-Strike Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.49:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.49:27020
Counter-Strike Public Server #3 – 194.93.134.51:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #4 (*PC ZONE* map pack)
– 194.93.134.51:27020

Unreal Tournament Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.52:7787
Unreal Tournament Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.52:7777

Team Fortress Classic Public Server #1
– 194.93.134.50:27015
Team Fortress Classic Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.50:27020

Password: monkey

NOISE SOLUTION

Forget graphics cards, for the time being at least, *Tim Ponting*'s here and he wants you to make some noise…

There's nothing quite like the scream ot an opponent taking double-enforcer damage at close range, except perhaps the satistying metallic swish ot a razorjack as it soars into the distance before severing some vital item of grunt anatomy. Or maybe the detonation of a trusty desert eagle is more your bag? Either way, there's no doubt that in-game sound has come a long way since the days ot AdLib bleeps and 8-bit, stereophonic Sound8lasters.

One thing's for sure, 3D audio brings a great deal to the party, both in trag-fests like *Unreal Tournament* and more cerebral creepers such as *Rogue Spear* – which demonstrates some ot the best use ot atmospheric environmental audio yet heard in a game.

The five cards we're testing here are all suitable for gaming. Four cards offer everything up to and Including 5.1 surround ('5.1' Indicating five 'normal' channels – front leff and right, rear leff and right and centre – plus one low-frequency sub-wooter channel). The fifth, while only teaturing tour output channels, is still an ideal gaming card when paired with a suitable 4.1 amplified speaker set-up.

We spent quite a while playing with these cards. Not only did we use them with a range ot games, but we also benchmarked each card using *Unreal Tournament.*

Interestingly, quite apart from the differing performance of the various cards, it's clear that our ears aren't particularly good at processing more than around 24 3D audio channels. In blind testing, we couldn't notice any difference between 32 and 64 30 audio channels, so bear in mind that once you hit a certain level of audio complexity, the number ot accelerated channels becomes academic. It's the quality, not the quantity that counts.

So what should you look tor in a gaming card? To a certain extent, the devices on offer here are overkill. Unless you habitually watch OVD movies in 5.1 audio in tront ot your PC (ie with the centre speaker on top ot or under your monitor), you're better off having a decent 4.1 speaker system permanently set up for your gaming. Look no further than VideoLogic's stunning Sirocco Crosstire, which will take the input from a 4.D gaming card (with stereo outputs for front and rear) and convert It to meaty 4.1 wooted-up carnage. Some of these 5.1 cards may have simpler brethren that may well come in rather cheaper – but still offer the same range ot benefits tor the gamer. With this in mind, read the individual reviews, then draw your own conclusions.

HERCULES GAMESURROUND FORTISSIMO II

⊗ £44.99 • Hercules • www.hercules-uk.com

The Fortissimo II is, technically speaking, the lowliest of cards on offer here, but in practice is probably the best targeted at the raw gamer. No 5.1 frippery here, just down-to-earth, feel-the-wrath-of-my-rocket, tour-channel gaming audio. It uses the mid-range Cirrus Logic Crystal SoundFusion CS4624 chipset, one of the popular and powerful 'all-purpose' soundcard sets. It claims up to 52 DirectSound 30 channels are accelerated in hardware; in any case, it's certainly happy with 32, the limit ot meaningful 3D audio performance as we discovered while running the *Unreal* benchmarks. Its pertormance compared tavourably with higher-end cards, making it a good choice tor the budget-conscious gamer, and in terms ot audio quality close to its CS463D-based brethren: it too supports the tull range of features offered by the Sensaura 30 audio standard.

It's also an excellent value bundle, particularly since it includes a tour-channel version of PowerDVD, ideal tor the casual DVD-er who watches vids on their PC every once in a while. Mucky DVDs? No, of course not, we're gamers. Entry-level musicians will also find much to recommend this card. Apart trom the excellent, if ublquitous, Yamaha XG softsynth (XG being an improved version ot General MIDI), a special version ot virtual studio Arturia Storm is bundled, allowing all kinds ot musical mayhem to be created without having to splash out on a dedicated package. And it also has both digital input and output.

All in all, the Fortissimo II is probably the only card in this round-up that gets an unhesitating thumbs-up at this pricepoint. With street prices around the £4D mark, this is an unmitigated bargain.

⊘ **Cheap? It's a bloody bargain mate.**

PCZVERDICT   **88%**

HERCULES GAMETHEATER XP

✪ £149 • Hercules • www.hercules-uk.com

↑ Every thing you need in one box.

I f the Fortissimo II aspires to be a multi-purpose workhorse (perhaps a Renault Scenic), the GameTheater clearly aspires to Rolls-Royce status. Everything is gold-plated, all the switches and components feel expensive, and it's bursting at the seams with sockets. Everywhere. *ZONE* reviewed the card a while ago, and gave it 83 per cent as a stand-alone, on the basis that if you tancy nabbing yourselt the best-built home enterfainment offering that's around, then this was it.

The card itselt is a minimalist affair with a large connector to the brawn – a breakout box joined to the card by a very, very fat metre-long cable. In fact, it's so thick, positioning ot the box can be a bit hit and miss since the cable seems to have a mind of its own.

The chipset powering the card is the CS4630, the same as that in VideoLogic's SonicFury. Not surprisingly, the *Unreal Tournament* benchmarks showed a broadly similar picture tor both cards, and very much in the same general area as the Forfissimo II.

The bundle is unsurprisingly generous at a street price of around £125, with everything you find in the Fortissimo box and a lot more besides – Including a tull DolbyDigital version of PowerDVD that can be connected easily to 5.1 amplified speaker sets tor home cinema use. The GameTheater also has four USB ports in the breakout box, ideal if the two or four you have in your PC are insufficient or inconveniently positioned tor hot-plugging.

While we applaud the production values, the ease of use for home cinema and its excellent music credentials, GameTheater is arguably not worth the premium for gamers – but if you take the plunge, it won't disappoint. We just wish we had your kinda money.

PCZVERDICT **70%**

VIDEOLOGIC SONICFURY

✪ £62 • Videologic • www.videologic.com

C ompared with some of the other bundles on offer here, the SonicFury is pretty lean. Though it shares the same chipset, gaming and 5.1 audio tunctionality as the GameTheater, it is achieved with the minimum of fuss.

We had high expectations of this card when released last year. The basic sound quality is clearly high – in tact, in sister magazine *PC Pro's* recent audio testing, it proved to have the quietest signal path – and it shows strong gaming promise. Performance is good in its peer group, the VideoLogic drivers marginally outperforming Hercules drivers with fewer 3D audio streams, while trailing them marginally with more. However, we'd expected driver revisions to push this chipset ahead of Creative Labs in the quality and performance stakes, which hasn't really happened. This is not to beliffle the card – it's still a good all-rounder.

One nice feature is the inclusion ot the Sensaura Virtual Ear for fine-tuning 3D audio using headphones. While the results aren't as good as those trom four-speaker set-ups (of course), it's still a great way of enhancing in-game audio when you've only got a limited budget. Watch tor our headphone round-up in a torthcoming issue.

It there's one criticism of SonicFury, it's that a Dolby Digital software DVD player is not bundled. There are cards at lower street prices that offer this as standard and so should SonicFury, offering as it does the full 5.1 output configuration.

Dt all the cards here, the SonicFury is attractive in the middle ground, though perhaps it would face some competition from the SoundBlaster Live! Player 5.1 that sits in the same street-price ballpark. However, it's clearly beffer value than the GameTheater and Acoustic Edge, and it you can lay your hands on an DEM version with no retail bundle online, you have something of a bargain.

PCZVERDICT **85%**

PHILIPS ACOUSTIC EDGE

⊛ £109 • Philips • www.pcsound.philips

The first thing we'd like to point out is that it would be a mistake to write off this card on the basis of its poor showing in the *Unreal Tournament* benchmark. It you read the subjective comments, you'll see the sound quality offered by this card is high and eminently tweakable, thanks to its reliance on various QSound technologies – head off to the website for a fuller explanation. Philips has also indicated future driver revisions will address performance in general and *UT* in particular.

However, it can't be denied that of all the cards, this is the one that seems the lowliest performer In terms of the drain on your CPU, despite claims of hardware acceleration of 96 DirectSound 3D audio streams and the tact it carries the most recent chipset.

On the plus side, the bundle is comparatively generous. Not only is there a full 5.1 savvy version ot PowerDVD bundled, but also two complete games – the superb *Rogue Spear*, a classic example ot EAX 2.0 at its best, and the rather less gobsmacking *Star Wars:*

Episode One Racer. Musicians can also rest easy with the inclusion of Yamaha's XG softsynth, plus coaxial digital input and output – more musician-friendly than the optical connectors which are more commonly used by consumer electronics goods like minidisc recorders.

If this card sat In the same price range as the SonicFury, it would stand a better chance of impressing. It sounds good and has potential it plenty of work is put into future drivers. However, a guide price in excess of £100 is around £40 too much in our opinion. Gamers are better off looking elsewhere or choosing the cheapest card in the new Philips range. The Rhythmic Edge, which at £49 competes on a much more level playing field, should also benefit from improved drivers.
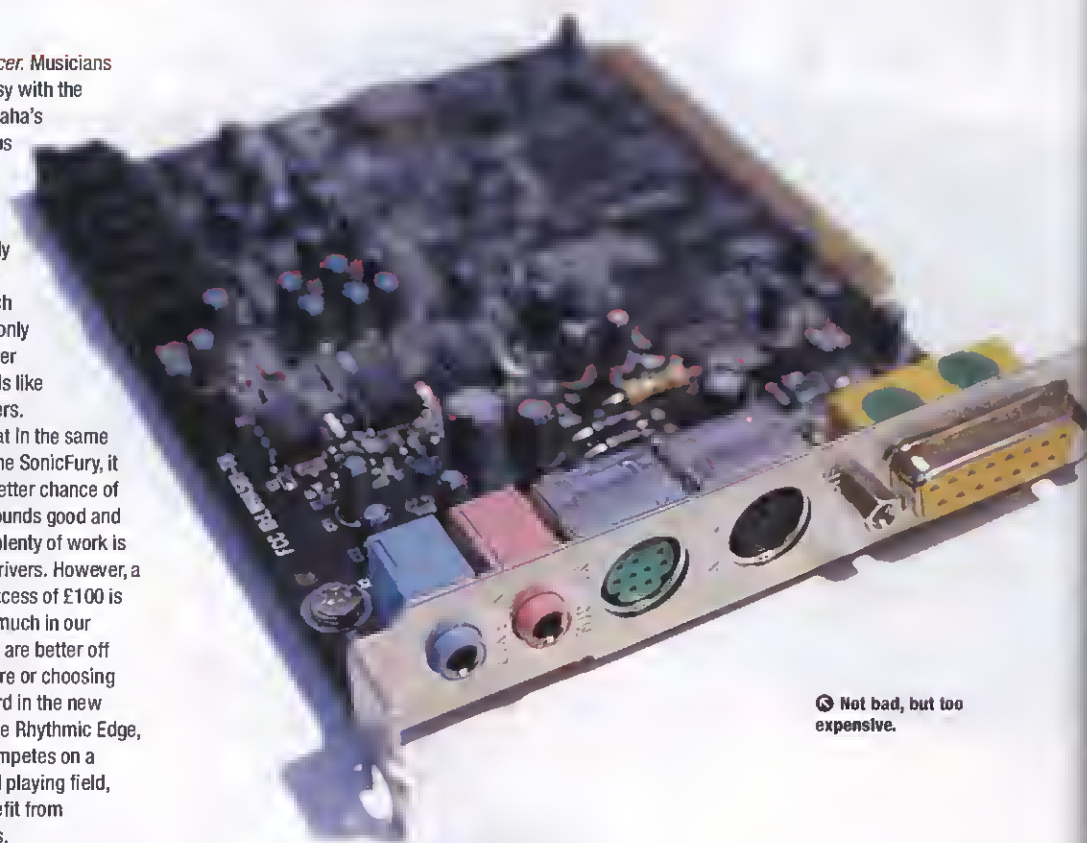
⊘ Not bad, but too expensive.

PCZVERDICT   **65%**

CREATIVE LABS SOUNDBLASTER LIVE! 5.1 PLATINUM

⊛ £179 • Creative Labs • www.europe.creative.com

Not only is Creative Labs the granddaddy of the soundcard world, having dominated the PC audio scene since the early '90s, but the SoundBlaster Livel range is currently the benchmark by which all new cards are measured, despite its age. While it began life as a premium product at a high price, successive card revisions have seen 5.1 audio added while the price has dropped steadily.

The version we have for review is not targeted at the casual gamer, but rather at the entry-level musician. That's not to say it's not suitable for gaming – you'll immediately notice how well the card performed in the *UT*

benchmarks – but in this form, the card is most certainly overkill.

It's also the most expensive here, mainly due to the extensive music software bundle that includes special versions of Cubasis sequencer, Recycle Lite loop tuner and WaveLab Lite editor. It's also the only card here with sampler functionality using SoundFont technology.

The Platinum configuration has a breakout box called the LiveDrive which sits in a 5.25-inch drive bay and offers convenient front panel audio connections. It also has an IR sensor, which paired with the supplied infrared remote can control your home entertainment activities, though your PC will need to be in view tor this to work and Creative curiously

don't supply a software DVD player, despite the high street price ot around £160.

Though this is clearly a quality product, gamers may be better off going for the plain SoundBlaster Live! 5.1 Player, which offers the same performance but without the music teatures – it would score correspondingly higher in this review. We did point this out, but Creative was keen the push the Platinum. What can we say?

⊘ Creative might be the grandaddy but this is one for gamers.

PCZVERDICT   **78%**

SOUNDCARD FEATURES TABLE

	Gamesurround Fortissimo II	GameTheater XP	Sonic Fury	Acoustic Edge	SoundBlaster Live!
Manufacturer	Hercules	Hercules	VideoLogic	Philips	Creative Labs
RRP or Street Price	£44.99	£149	£62	£109	£179
Website	www.hercules-uk.com	www.hercules-uk.com	www.videologic.com	www.pcsound.philips.com	www.europe.creative.com
Chipset	Cirrus Logic CS4624	Cirrus Logic CS4630	Cirrus Logic CS4630	Philips Thunderbird Avenger	EMU 10K1
External analogue inputs	Mo Mic, St Line	St Aux (St Line, Mo Mic on Rack)	Mo Mic, St Line, St Aux2 (Versajack)	Mo Mic, St Line	Mo Mic, St Line, (St Aux2, St Lin2/mo Mic2 on LiveDrive)
External analogue outputs	St Front, St Rear	St Front, St Rear, Mo Centre, Mo Subwoofer St Headphones on Rack	St Front, St Rear, St Centre/Sub (Versajack) St Headphones (Versjack),	St Front, St Rear, St Centre/Sub	St Front, St Rear, St Centre/Sub, St Headphones
Internal analogue connections	St CD In, St Aux In	St CD in, St Aux2 in	St CD in, St Aux in, Mo TAD in/out	St CD in, St Aux in, Mo TAD in/out	St CD in, St Aux in, Mo TAD in/out
External digital inputs	Optical S/P-DIF	Optical S/P-DIF, Coax S/P-DIF	-	Coax S/P-DIF (via breakout cable)	Optical S/P-DIF, Coax S/P-DIF
Internal digital inputs	-	-	CD S/P-DIF	CD S/P-DIF	CD S/P-DIF
Digital outputs	Optical S/P-DIF	Optical S/P-DIF, Coax S/P-DIF	Optical S/P-DIF (Versajack)	Coax S/P-DIF (via breakout cable)	Optical S/P-DIF, Coax S/P-DIF
Max audio quality	16-bit/48KHz	16-bit/48KHz	16-bit/48KHz	16-bit/48KHz	16-bit/48KHz
Hardware 3D Audio Streams	52	52	52	96	32
Joystick/MIDI ports	Std MIDI/Gameport	MIDI In/Out sockets	Std MIDI/Gameport	Std MIDI/Gameport	MIDI In/Out via breakout cables
USB Ports	No	Yes, 4	No	No	No
DVD Software?	Yes, Power DVD Pro 4	Yes, Power DVD Pro 6	No	Yes, PowerDVD 3.0	No
Surround Type	4.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1
Yamaha Softsynth?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
SoundFont Support?	No	No	No	No	Yes
Sensaura	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
QSound	No	No	No	Yes	No
Subjective comments	Decent audio quality, EAX not as good as Live or Acoustic Edge but at this price not as far behind the pack as you'd expect	Nice meaty sound, good 3D positioning, reasonable EAX 2.0 rendition though we still prefer the Live's EAX Reverb	Nice meaty sound, good 3D positioning, reasonable EAX 2.0 rendition though we still prefer the Live's EAX Reverb	Very crisp, clear audio and excellent overall 3D positioning, the next best EAX after Live. All in all a great sounding card	The best for EAX gamers and it's 3D positioning is pretty good too.

Note: All cards support EAX 1.0 and 2.0.
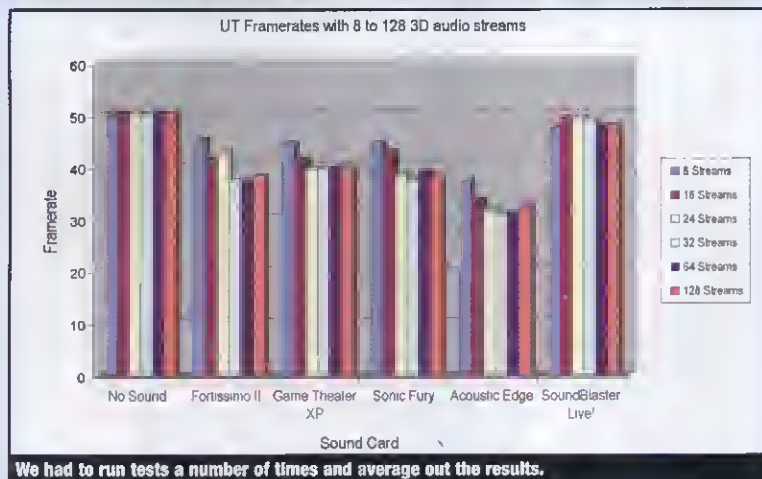Mo and St refer to mono and stereo respectively.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT BENCHMARKS

Firstly, we recorded a five-minute demo with 17 players (me plus 16 very nasty bots) tumbling around in a small deathmatch level, Fractal Reactor. As this is designed for a maximum of four players, you can imagine the carnage. The reason for choosing a small, open level with a large number of players was to ensure that there were a vast number of 3D audio streams audible during demo playback – screams, gunfire, explosions, grunts, footfalls... The resulting demo was played back using conservative graphical settings to maximise the frame-rate, with sound set to high quality, 44.1KHz, 3D accelerated in hardware. Using the Effects switch in Advanced Audio Preferences, the number of 3D audio channels were limited to 8, 16, 24, 32, 64 and 128, and the resultant average frame-rates recorded.

We had to run tests a number of times and average out the results, as all cards exhibited a high degree of variation with the same settings. We also had some fairly confusing results that showed

larger numbers of streams outperforming smaller numbers, the opposite of what you would expect. VideoLogic suggested it could have been due to *Unreal Tournament* assuming only a certain number of streams could be handled by the soundcard, and handing off the rest to the CPU to handle. Since the 1GHz CPU

wasn't overstressed, it was actually decoding the 3D audio faster in software than the soundcard was in hardware. This would go some way to explaining the odd results. We've printed them, inconsistencies and all, so bear in mind that these figures may not be as telling as, for example, video benchmarks.

UT Framerates with 8 to 128 3D audio streams

We had to run tests a number of times and average out the results.

CONCLUSION

None of the cards we looked at provide the ultimate solution for gamers at a reasonable cost, although the VideoLogic SonicFury comes the closest. Combine these with a set of surround speakers and you'll have a solution that delivers the best sound you can get out of your games without breaking the bank. If even this is beyond your means, the Gamesurround Fortissimo II is amazing value at around £40.

Creative Labs, the dominating force in the soundcard market still provide an excellent solution, although the Platinum card it was keen to push at the time of this round-up is too costly for the average gamer. Check out the SoundBlaster Live! 5.1 Player for a cheaper alternative, but this still doesn't stack up against our two recommended purchases. Both the Philips and the Hercules GameTheater are excellent gaming solutions, but we feel they're too expensive for what they offer.

GADGETS

More bright and shiny things to make you happy

MOTOROLA ACCOMPLI

£280 • 0870 9010 555 • www.motorola.co.uk

Mobile phones just keep getting better. Not that that's necessarily a good thing because no sooner have you got your hands on the smallest, lightest, most advanced model on the market, than another appears that makes you look, quite frankly, somewhat dated.

The trick is to go for the phone with the most acronyms. The more the salesperson throws at you, the less likely it is to be instantly superseded. And with the Motorola Accompli you're onto a winner. It's a PDA, it's got WAP and it's GPRS. In layman's terms it means it's a diary (Personal Digital Organiser) and it's got access to the Internet (Wireless Application Protocol) where you can download information far quicker, courtesy of the latest phone technology (General Packet Radio Service). Right, now we can get to the good bits.

First up it looks good. Get it out in the pub and you're sure to attract admiring glances. Then there's the list of things it can do and be: address book, email, notepad, diary, voice notes, alarm clock, calculator, currency converter, world clock and games. You can also sync it to your PC (via its serial port) and other PDAs via infrared. And all in a 98x60x28mm package.

Motorola has also managed to squeeze in a decent-sized, hi-res screen, adding to the improved WAP experience. And from here you can easily navigate the menu using its touch-sensitive screen, or jog-dial. There's even handwriting recognition for sending mails and text messages. Quite simply, if it's not there you shouldn't be doing it. ✪✪✪✪✪

✪ It's small, cute and works a treat.
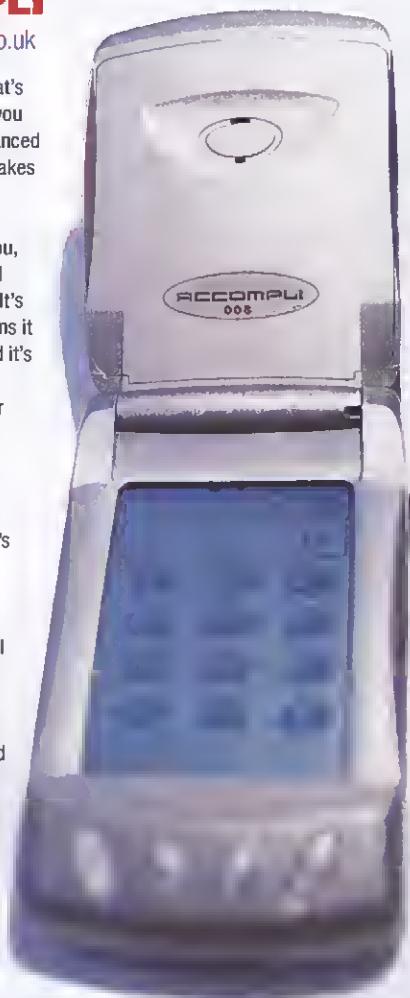
✪ Just snap and send, it's all a bit simple really.

ERICSSON COMMUNICAM

£100 • 08705 237 237 • mobileinternet.ericsson.com

Digital photography is a wonderful thing. It allows you to share those special moments, at the touch of a button. Just hit send in your email and the whole company is able to enjoy the time Martin Korda collapsed at the Christmas party. But then how many times have you promised to mail photos to friends and family and then just kind of forgotten?

What you need is a camera that lets you send your photos the moment you take them – like this one from Ericsson prepared earlier. Simply strap it onto the bottom of your WAP phone (Ericsson, of course) and you can shoot and send before anyone can stop you. So how does it work? Very simply, actually. Just press the shutter button and within seconds a grainy photo will appear on your phone's screen. You then use the scroll bar to email the image to your friends and/or send it to your WebAlbum, on the Ericsson website.

However, there is one major drawback. You can only store up to five images at one time, so if you're out for the night, you've got to keep sending the images to allow space for more pictures – something that might become a bind after a pint or two.

And, as you'd expect, picture quality isn't great, with a resolution of only 352x288 pixels. But then the CommuniCam is all about instant gratification. You snap, it sends – everybody's happy. Except for Korda. ✪✪✪✪✪

THE SOPRANOS BOX SET SERIES 2

✪ £52.99 • Certificate 18 • Warner Home Video
If you haven't caught up with *The Sopranos* on TV then you're missing out on the best series on TV ever. Each episode is a perfectly paced and crafted piece, and each one can rival any of the best gangster films, including *Goodfellas*. You think we're going OTT? Buy this and the first series box set, set aside a weekend, get in your supplies and prepare to be entertained. When you've finished you'll be ready to wax lyrical about how James Gandolfini is probably the most watchable actor in the world, and that when the last episode of Series 2 finished you went back to the start and watched it all over again. Series 3 is now on E4 and it's as good as ever. We'll shut up now.
EXTRA FEATURES
None
✪✪✪✪✪
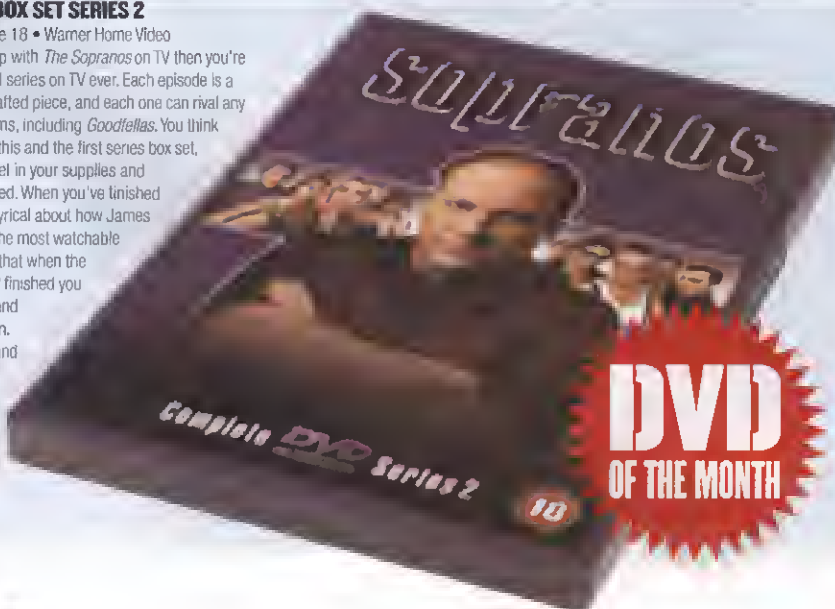
DVD OF THE MONTH

HARD BOILED

✪ £17.99 • Certificate 18 • Tartan Video
If you've been playing and enjoying *Max Payne*, or indeed *Half-Life: The Opera*, now is the time to return to where it all started, in possibly the finest gunplay-based action film ever made. Presented in all its bullet-riddled uncut widescreen magnificence here for the first time, *Hard Boiled* is the ultimate heroic bloodshed masterpiece and John Woo's finest film, Chow Yun-Fat, possibly the most charismatic action hero ever to grace the screen, puts in a typically brilliant performance as Tequila, hard-boiled cop on a rampage, in a film that has more classic scenes than most directors construct in a lifetime. Do you get the impression we like this film? As Martin would say, you'd be mad to miss it.
EXTRA FEATURES Interview with John Woo • Trailers • Uncut scene comparison • Filmographies • stills • Restored version
✪✪✪✪✪

INTEL POCKET CONCERT AUDIO PLAYER

£299 • 0870 607 2439 • www.intelplay.com

It's a generally accepted rule that whenever a company brings out a first version of any computing product, it's best to steer clear until they've ironed out the inevitable kinks. So when Intel announced its first MP3 player, it's fair to say the *ZONE* clan was somewhat apprehensive.

But for once, we were proved wrong. Those irritating Intel experts have managed to produce a highly respectable first effort. The Pocket Concert Audio Player is bursting with natty features and is simple enough for even the biggest ejit to master.

What immediately impresses is its 128Mb of built-in memory – twice as much as most other players on the market. And it doesn't end there. It has a digital FM tuner with 10 presets and an equalizer with 17 bass and treble settings. Intel also bundles its own Audio Manager software as well as MusicMatch Jukebox Plus.

In addition, sound quality is far better than most other players we've listened too. No doubt this is helped by its 'street-style' headphones that wrap around the back of your neck. Not only do these make you look da bomb (*what does that mean? – ageing editor*), they also provide far better sound than those uncomfortable, and basically crap, in-ear phones.

Admittedly it's no stunner, and the fact that you can't upgrade its memory is downright inconsiderate. But when you're spending this kind of money on a player, chances are you're not gagging to rush out and immediately spend more. And four hours of music should be enough to satisfy most music junkies. ●●●●●

🔾 **Treat yourself to some tunes.**

🔾 **Patience is the key to enjoying the Predator.**

IOMEGA PREDATOR

£229 • 020 7365 9527 • www.iomega.com/europe

Once upon a time, many years ago, computers were strictly the domain of grey-haired men sporting a grey suit, and even greyer skin. Little wonder then, that the PCs they tapped away on were also grey. It was a genius piece of styling where machine reflected man.

Today's computer user is a somewhat different species. Let's face it, we all use one and we're very, very cool. Unfortunately, it seems most computer designers have overlooked this rather important fact. But not all of them.

Iomega is one such company. Its new CD-RW drive wouldn't look out of place on the great Enterprise itself, with its purple and silver casing. Even its name, the Predator, indicates its alternative use as a deadly and exotic weapon.

However, on closer inspection the Predator is a little disappointing. What holds it back is its USB connection, which has a maximum burn and read speed of 4x4x6, which can only be described as slow, taking around 18 minutes to burn a whole CD. What this does mean, however, is that it writes information more carefully and allows more time for drinking tea. Another downfall is that it doesn't utilise BURN-Proof technology, which protects against buffer under run error (ruined CDs basically).

You could always go for the FireWire model, which has far more impressive speeds of 8x4x32, but also a far higher price tag at £299 – and, of course, you need a FireWire card. You pays your money and you makes your choice. But either way you'll end up with a seriously funky piece of kit – you just might need a bit of patience to enjoy it. ●●●●○

CJ100 POCKET PHOTO

£159.99 • 01992 710 770 • www.kiiro.co.uk

As far as gadgets go, small is generally good. If you buy a digital camera you want something that fits into your pocket, and the CJ100 is certainly pocket-size. Unfortunately, its diminutive nature brings its own baggage. There's no viewfinder and the LCD screen is tiny – you can just about see shapes in there if you squint hard enough, but the numbers and symbols that make up the on-screen display are almost impossible to read unless you've got 20-20 vision.

It comes with 8Mb flash memory, which can hold up to 63 images at the highest resolution. It sounds impressive until you find out this is only 640x480, which is only any good for website use, and even then it's pretty ropey. There's also no way of connecting the camera to the mains, and the battery life is wholly inadequate (mainly because you have to use the screen to take pictures.) We spent about 20 minutes taking photos and then found we didn't have enough battery life to get them across and onto the PC. OK, it's cheap and as a webcam it's got its uses but we've seen better for less.

The attached manual poses the interesting question: 'Who uses Pocket Photo?' Apparently 'Policemen and researchers, who need to prove something is true…' Call us cynics but we don't think the CJ100 is the latest in police surveillance, which is a shame as we'd probably be able to get away with a lot more if the rozzers had to rely on this for accurate photographs. ●●●●○

🔾 **Not the smartest gadget you've seen.**

SEXY BEAST

🔾 FilmFour • Cert 18 • £17.99

The sun-bleached skies of Spain clash perfectly with rain-soaked London in this the latest in a long and tiring line of British gangster flicks. What stands out here, however, is the fact that the action takes second place behind the characters; Ian McShane and Ben Kingsley as you've never seen or heard before and Ray Winstone, apart from the Speedos, as you have. Altogether, not too bad, although as soon as Kingsley meets his inevitable end the rest kind of falls apart.

EXTRA FEATURES Trailer • On Location • Interviews • Behind the scenes • deleted scene. ●●●●●

STRANGE DAYS

🔾 £15.99 • Certificate: 18 • 20th Century Fox

Ralph Fiennes steps out of period costume for once and takes up the role of Lenny Nero, a scruffy ex-cop dealing in virtual reality entertainment straight from the human brain, in this original sci-fi thriller. It's the last few days before the new millennium in a dark and decaying New York City and Lenny uncovers a plot that could cause more mayhem than the average Brixton Saturday night, as well as struggling with the reality that his ex-girlfriend wants to stay ex, and her new boyfriend wants to smash in his face. Superbly filmed, it somewhat depressing.

EXTRA FEATURES Trailer • Director's Commentary • 4 Page booklet with production notes. 🔾 ●●●●●

THE OMEN TRILOGY BOX SET

🔾 £35.99 • Certificate 18 • 20th Century Fox

Back in the days when horror films weren't made by Americans desperate to take the piss out its money-paying audience, classics like The Omen and The Omen 2 shocked under-age kids around the world. Concerning the trials and tribulations of the born-again antichrist, the films were as much about inner struggle and growing pains as anything sinister and supernatural.

OK, The Final Conflict may have been a bit of a disappointment but at the asking price this is a must-buy for any horror aficionado, or anyone who likes the idea of a box-set opening out into the shape of a cross. (Although surely it should have been inverted.)

EXTRA FEATURES Audio commentary by all three directors • documentary *666: The Omen Revealed* • *Curse Or Coincidence* featurette • Four Jerry Goldsmith interview clips • Trailers ●●●●○
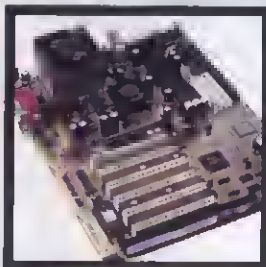
BUYER'S GUIDE

Tim Ponting is always ready to listen to what you have to say and is always grateful for any help he can get. Check out our motherboard section for some top tips from one of our lovely readers, Iain... Elsewhere, prices are still dropping and there's a new recommended budget soundcard so you can make noise on the cheap.

MOTHERBOARD

BEST BUY

ABIT KT-7A RAID
STREET PRICE £130, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Abit
TELEPHONE 01438 741999   **WEBSITE** www.abit.nl/english

Thanks to a chap called Iain for pointing out that the Abit KT7A/KT7A-RAID motherboard is not listed as supporting 1.4GHz Athlon processors. In fact, this motherboard *will* support up to 1.4GHz processors provided you have a recent hardware version (v1.3 should be fine) and a BIOS above 3r02, which as yet is not finalised. In addition, the processor you buy must have its Level 1 bridges disconnected – you can't run an overclocked slower processor and pretend it's a 1.4 gigger. So if you're buying a new processor and mobo, the 1.4Ghz Athlon and Abit KT7A/RAID mobo should work fine together, provided you upgrade to the correct BIOS.

BEST BUDGET   NEW ENTRY

GIGABYTE GA-7ZXR REV 3
STREET PRICE £99 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte
TELEPHONE (01908) 362700
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

A new entry here, now the GA-7ZM is not easily available anymore (though the 7ZMM version is). It's a bit more pricey, and offers the same benefits as the KT7A but al a lower pricepoint. It even has four-channel audio on board courtesy of the Creative Labs CT5880 PCI chipset. Make sure you go for the Rev 3 board if you're paying this kind of price.

PROCESSOR

BEST BUY
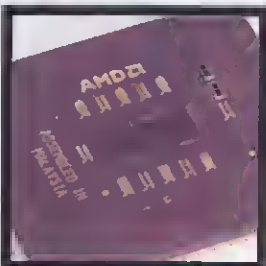
AMD 1.4GHZ ATHLON
STREET PRICE £160
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE (01276) 803100   **WEBSITE** www.amd.com

£160

You can now buy a 1.4GHz Socket A Athlon for the miserly sum of £160, located at Dabs.com in the UK. Athlon is still clearly the processor of choice for the gamer, at least until there's good reason to buy multi-processor motherboard/CPU combos for gaming. The 1.4GHz Athlon is a screamer, and unbelievably cheap for the performance it offers. As Athlons over 1GHz are only available only in Socket A configuration, make sure you've got the right motherboard. Bear in mind that you'll need to fit a hefty fan to keep the beast cool, and that it should fit properly. It may tangle with components on the motherboard or the PSU if it's the wrong shape.

BEST BUDGET

AMD 800MHZ DURON
STREET PRICE £43, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE 01276 803100
WEBSITE www.amd.com

Durons are basically Athlons with smaller Level 2 (L2) processor caches. This reduces overall performance somewhat, but still compares favourably with Intel's ageing Celeron chip cache structure. Besides, Duron still has the blistering Floating Point Unit (FPU) mathematical calculation speed, making it the processor of choice for gamers.

HARD DRIVE

BEST BUY

IBM DESKSTAR 75GXP 30Gb
STREET PRICE £110, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER IBM
TELEPHONE 0800 169 1458   **WEBSITE** www.storage.ibm.com

Though increasingly difficult to find in capacities less than 75Gb, the Deskstar 75GXP range is simply superb. Mine sits in the heart of a hard disk recording system for music, which needs fantastic performance and unquestionable reliability, both of which it delivers. It has a rotational speed of 7,200 RPM (faster than some but slower than others – a good compromise between price and performance) and an average seek time of less than 8.5ms. If 30Gb ain't big enough for you, the range extends to a whopping 75Gb, though you'll need £230 to buy such a beast.

BEST BUDGET

SEAGATE U SERIES 5 20Gb
STREET PRICE £66, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Seagate
TELEPHONE 01628 890366
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

It's tough these days finding a drive that doesn't offer an ATA-100 interface – in fact, all the decent ATA-66 drives cost more than their ATA-100 equivalents. Seagate's fabulous ATA-100 U Series 5 drives redefine budget performance, featuring 5,400 RPM platters with a sub-9ms seek time. The 20Gb drive is a good compromise between price and capacity.

MONITOR

BEST BUY

IIYAMA VISION MASTER PRO 510 22in
STREET PRICE £676
MANUFACTURER iiyama
TELEPHONE 01438 745482   **WEBSITE** www.iiyama.co.uk

I've been a devotee of iiyama products for years – both my monitors at home are iiyamas, both are comparatively old, yet as good as new. The Vision Master Pro 510 has a stunning 22in screen (albeit with only around 20in of it visible). The tube is a Mitsubishi Diamondtron NF (Natural Flat), arguably the best-performing flat-screen CRT for the money currently available. Of all the large-screen monitors we've come across recently, it's the best all-rounder, with a tight focus right to the screen corners and fabulous colour purity. It also features iiyama's own Anti-Glare coating, and a maximum resolution of 2048x1536.

BEST BUDGET

HANSOL 710P 17in
STREET PRICE £160, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hansol
TELEPHONE 01252 360400
WEBSITE www.hansol-uk.com

For the budget-conscious gamer in need of a monitor, Hansol is a company well worth a look. There is nothing naff at all about the 710P – yet it still has a fabulously low price for the specification. It will handle 1024x768 with a vertical refresh rate of 85Hz, and 1600x1200 at a creditable 75Hz. For the money there's not a lot that'll touch this.

GRAPHICS CARD

BEST BUDGET

VIOEOLOGIC VIVIO!XS 32M8
STREET PRICE £92 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE (01923) 277488
WEBSITE www.videologic.com

The new Kyro II chipset blows its slower Kyro brethren to smithereens at 175MHz clockspeed as opposed to 115MHz. Reviewed in this issue on p107, the 32Mb Vivid!XS replaces the Hercules 3D Prophet 4500 as Best Budget Buy – but only just, there's barely anything to choose between the two. The Herc has 64Mb and costs a few quid more... Dammit, you choose.

BEST BUY

ELSA GLAOIAC 920
STREET PRICE £286, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Elsa
TELEPHONE (0800) 056 3445   **WEBSITE** www.elsa.de/international/uk/index.htm

Finally, this card that's been Best Buy for the last three months is now available to buy, and with the new NVIDIA drivers, it kicks ass. The 32-bit colour performance is cool, the FSAA (full scene anti-aliasing) is blinding, and it's got all the nifty DX8 features you could want. We love it, and its price has dropped again from the ridiculously high RRP. It's the first card to support the sexier features of DirectX 8.0. Elsa's Gladiac features an S-Video socket for output to TV – a hell of a lot more useful than you'd think and comes with a full, specially enhanced version of *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*.
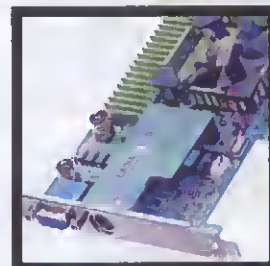
SOUND CARD

BEST BUDGET
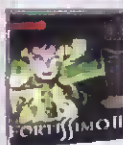
HERCULES GAMESURROUNO FORTISSIMO II
STREET PRICE £36 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
PHONE (020) 8686 5600
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

This four-channel audio card represents excellent value for money (see p102), is a good performer, and comes with a generous software bundle. Its DirectSound 3D support is gib-tastic. You can even get four channels of surround sound from your DVD movies with a special version of PowerDVD!

BEST BUY

VIOEOLOGIC SONICFURY
STREET PRICE £62, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488   **WEBSITE** www.videologic.com

£62

VideoLogic's SonicFury was the first sound card to utilise the super-efficient Crystal CS4630 chipset, and is still the best value for money. What's so special about it? The chipset, known as SoundFusion, is a multi-purpose Digital Signal Processor (DSP) that can be reprogrammed in software depending on the function it's being used to accelerate. As a result, it can give hardware support for up to 52 streams of DirectSound 3D audio, more than enough for today's crop of games. If you hunt around, you can also find an OEM version of the card on sale with no software bundle – a bargain at under £60.

SPEAKERS

BEST BUDGET

ALTEC LANSING ATP3
STREET PRICE £75
MANUFACTURER Altec Lansing
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.alteclansing.com

The only other multimedia speaker company we've ever had time for is Altec Lansing, whose decently priced products never fail to impress, even if they lack the hi-fi credentials of VideoLogic products. The ATP3 is a sub and two sat combination that delivers a typically meaty, crisp Altec sound. If your budget stretches, you can try the ATP5 for 4.1 gaming.

BEST BUY

VIOEOLOGIC SIROCCO CROSSFIRE
STREET PRICE £210, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488   **WEBSITE** www.videologic.com

Quite how many times this speaker set is going to appear in the *ZONE* halls of fame I'm not sure, but it shows no sign of being eclipsed in terms of quality for 4.1 gaming. By 4.1 we mean, front left and right and rear left and right satellite speakers, coupled with a big meaty subwoofer. The fact that this speaker set is rated at 100W RMS doesn't sound that impressive – but when you consider that you can crank the dial around 80 per cent of the way before they start to distort, you'll understand our fondness for these. And with 1000W Peak Mean Power Output on tap, the loud bits are, um, really flipping loud.

CDRW DRIVES

BEST BUDGET

TEAC COW58EK 8X8X32
STREET PRICE £87, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Teac
TELEPHONE 01923 225235
WEBSITE www.teac.co.uk

I've just had to buy a load of CD/RW drives and these Teac drives were dead cheap, easy to install and have worked without a hitch. Bearing in mind my first CD-RW drive cost me well over £250 and was flaky and slow, these babies are a good deal. Make sure you shop around and you're laughing all the way to dubiously legal compilations...

BEST BUY

PLEXTOR 16/10/40A
STREET PRICE £149, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Plextor
TELEPHONE +32 2 725 5522   **WEBSITE** www.plextor.com

Another one of those hardware recommendations based on experience. We've been running Plextor CDs, DVDs and CD-Rs for years in our machines, both at home and at work, and they're a) bulletproof and b) fast as anything you'll get within a few quid of the asking price. This is a brand new drive that is dead fast, offers Sanyo Burnproof technology and is competitively priced alongside some good contenders from Yamaha and Mirai. It comes with WinOnCD (nowhere near as good as Nero but proven) and offers CD-R, CD-RW and fast CD-Read performance. I'd upgrade, but my ancient SCSI 6x Plextor CD-R still cuts the mustard – three years on...

JOYSTICKS

BEST BUDGET

SAITEK CY8ORG 30 GOLO
STREET PRICE £45
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE (01454) 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.co.uk

Despite the grungy website and horrible joysticks of yesteryear, Saitek's current generation of sticks are fabulous. The Cyborg Gold is a top-line USB stick that excels across the board. The design is superb, both strong and infinitely adjustable – even lefties are catered for – and its response and accuracy are unequalled, even among more pricey competition.

BEST BUY

MICROSOFT SIOEWINOER FORCEFEEO8ACK 2
STREET PRICE £65 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE (0870) 601 0100   **WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/products/hardware/sidewinder/sidewinder.htm

Force-feedback products aren't everyone's cup of tea, but if you are interested, nothing comes close to the SideWinder FF2. It's a huge, heavy tabletop affair, with the power transformer built into the base. An infrared sensor causes the stick to leap to attention when you grasp it – I suspect my missus likes it for that reason alone. The force-feedback routines work extremely well – mainly because the motors are so powerful. If more games made better use of the technology, it would be a must-have piece of gear.
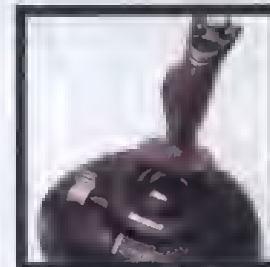
SIM NATION

➔ **FANTASY MAKER** Rhianna Pratchett

Whether you love 'em or hate 'em, *The Sims* have proved, mainly by occupying several places in the games charts at once, that they are here to stay. For those that love them, this month's Extended Play brings you lots of things to help you create your dream Sim house, and for those that hate them lots of reasons to laugh at those who love them.

I quickly abandoned *The Sims* after a few hours of playing, when I realised that I could run someone else's life much better than I could run my own. I'm actually hoping they will develop a Sim microchip that can be implanted into the back of my neck and then someone could control my life for me. I'd never be late for work, never leave washing-up lying around and little fuzzy clouds would appear around me whenever I took a shower. Easy life!

YOUR HOSTS
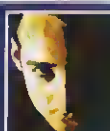
Adam Phillips Keith Pullin Phil Wand

CHEATMAS

More cheap tricks for all you dirty cheating varmints

⭐ **HE'S CANNY** Keith Pullin

X-COM: ENFORCER
Infogrames
Hit '~' to bring up the console and type these codes:

xgod	God mode
xfly	Fly mode
killpawns	Kill all enemies
setjumpz x	Set jump height (where x is 500 to normal)
setspeed x	Set speed (where x is 2 to normal)
xghost	No clipping
xwalk	No clipping/Fly mode off

DESPERADOS: WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE
Infogrames
Press 'Shift' and 'F11', then enter these cheats:

timeless	Stop time
schneider	End mission
clint	Win mission
fidel castro	View dialogues
medic	View hints
powerman	New gun
jackal	Extra ammo
hollow man	Invisibility
show me all	Show all objects
zeus	Help
epitaph	Victory condition display
whats my destiny	Display briefing

ALONE IN THE DARK: THE NEW NIGHTMARE
Infogrames
To get multiple save charms, play as Camby. Leave the lobby of the manor to activate a cut-scene that depicts a meeting between Camby and Edenshaw. At the end of the cut-scene Camby is given a charm of saving. Now save immediately after the cut-scene ends, reload, and the cut-scene restarts, allowing you to pick up four more saves.
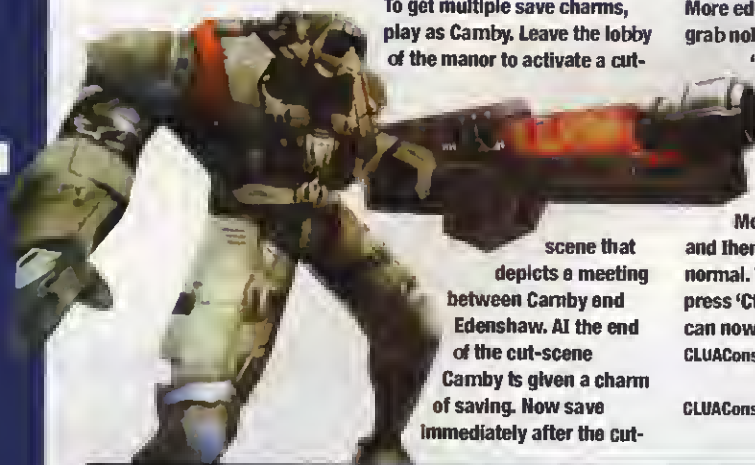
SUBMARINE TITANS
Strategy First
During the game press 'Enter' and then type:

AIR	Full air
TECH	All technology
ENERGY	Full energy
FOW	Reveal map
SILICON	Full silicon
EXITON	+1,000 gold, +5,000 corium, +10,000 metal
METAL	+1,000 metal
GOLD	+1,000 gold
CORIUM	+5,000 corium

BALDUR'S GATE 2: THRONE OF BHAAL
Interplay
More editing needed here so grab notepad and open the 'Baldur.ini' file in the game installation directory. Find the 'Program Options' line and underneath that type 'Debug Mode=1'. Save the file and then run the game as normal. To enter the console press 'Ctrl' and 'Space'. You can now enter these codes:

CLUAConsole:AddGold(x)
Where x is gold
CLUAConsole:ExploreArea(x)
Reveal map area

STUPID COMPETITION

Where cheating and pointlessness are qualities to be admired

So you fancy yourself as a bit of a cheat master do you? Well, here's your chance to prove it by entering our Stupid Compo. All you have to do to enter is send us your most pointless cheats. If we think your cheat is stupid enough, we'll not only print it and your name, we'll also send you the most ridiculous prize we can find in the *PC ZONE* prize cupboard. What more incentive do you need?

Please send your cheats, with the title Stupid Compo, a brief description of what they (allegedly) do, along with your name and address, to letters@pczone.co.uk. Make sure you include all your correct details, so if you win we know where to send your special prize. This month's winner is Calum McMinn from Angus, Scotland with his cheat for *Duke Nukem 3D*. Just type DNCASHMAN when you're playing, press space and the Duke will start throwing out cash, and since cash can't be picked up or used, you'll agree it's pretty stupid. Calum wins this enviable wooden sword and shield set from *Age Of Kings: The Conquerors*.

CLUAConsole:SetCurrentXP(x)
Where x is experience

MoveToArea x Move character/party to new map where x is:

ARD900	Temple District
ARDB00	Graveyard District
AR0040	Slums District
AR0700	Waukeens Promenade
AR1000	Government District
ARD500	Bridge District
ARD300	Docks District
AR002D	City Gates
AR1100	Umar Hills
AR25DD	Suldanesslar
AR2900	The Nine Hells
AR12D1	Domain of the Dragon
AR1512	Asylum Dungeon
AR08D1	Bodhis Dungeon
ARD51B	Astral Prison
AR0411	Planar Sphere
ARD202	Cult of the Unseeing Eye
ARD204	Rift Dungeon
AR0414	Demon Outerworld
AR13DD	De'Arnise Hold
AR2000	Trademeet
AR1900	Druids Grove

Also, you may want to try these cheats. With the debug mode on, type 'CLUAConsole:Enable CheatKeys():' into the console and press these keys:

Ctrl, Shift and 8	Max stats
Ctrl and T	Heal entire party
Ctrl and R	Heal a character
Ctrl and Y	Kill an enemy
Ctrl and J	Teleport to mouse pointer

INDEPENDENCE WAR 2: EDGE OF CHAOS
Infogrames

Use notepad or some other editor to open the 'defaults.ini' file in the main *IWAR2* directory. Change 'developer_mode = 0' to 'developer_mode = 1'. Now go to the 'configs' folder and add the following lines to the 'default.ini' file under the cheat key section at the bottom:

[icPlayerPilot.DevIndestructable]

Keyboard, I, Ctrl, Alt
[icPlayerPilot.DevKillCurrentTarget]
Keyboard, X, Ctrl, Alt
[icPlayerPilot.DevJumpToCurrentTarget]
Keyboard, G, Ctrl, Alt
[icPlayerPilot.DevDamageSelf]
Keyboard, K, Ctrl, Alt

To activate the cheat just hit the corresponding keys during the game.

OPERATION FLASHPOINT
Codemasters

You can save more than once in a mission by deleting the old save game file found in the Users\\Saved\Campaigns\1985 directory. Just Alt-Tab out of the game, create a back-up copy of the current save file, put it in a safe place elsewhere, and then delete the save file. Now 'Alt-Tab' back to the game and press 'Esc' to pause. You can now save the game again, and you can also repeat the process infinitely. Good eh?

HALF-LIFE: BLUE SHIFT
Vivendi

Run the game with the '-console' command tagged onto the end of the executable file. During the game press the '~' key and type 'sv_cheats 1' to activate the cheats. You may now use these commands:

god	God mode
noclip	No clip mode
impulse 101	Give all weapons
skill x	Adjusts skill level where x is 1 for easiest and 3 for hardest
sv_gravity x	Adjusts gravity where x is 800 for normal and D for no gravity
sv_accelerate x	Adjusts jumping speed where x is 10 for normal. Increase the value for bigger jumps

ANACHRONOX
Eidos Interactive

To activate a cheat menu you need to edit the Anachronox\ anoxdata\CONFIGS\Default.cfg file. Find the line 'set debug 0' and change the zero to a one. Now start up the game (it will be in debug mode initially) and bring up the console by hitting the little old '~' (tilde) key. Type 'invoke 1:86' to start the cheats and then type any of these two:

battlewin	Skip battles
noclip	No clipping mode

We're not scared anymore...

DEAR KEITH

Keith Pullin counsels more troubled gamers...

SOCKET TO 'EM
Q I'm playing *Lord of Destruction*, the *Diablo 2* expansion pack. Can you tell me what to do with the runes?
Andrew Mills, email

A Runes can be placed into a multitude of socketed items, but their true potential is only fulfilled when combined in the proper order to form rune-words. For example, in Act V, Qual-Kehk gives you the runes Ral, Ori and Tal. If you fix those into a shield, an item is created that increases virtually all your character's attributes. Runes are very powerful and are worth experimenting with in a variety of ways.

MONSTER DECISION
Q My question is simple: what is the best creature to use in *Black & White*?
Aaron Gripp, Brent Cross

A Simple question – difficult answer. Opinion is divided over this; a lot of people prefer the fighting prowess of the Tiger, Lion or Leopard, whereas others go for the intelligence and learning capabilities of the Gorilla, Ape, or Mandrill. The Sheep and Turtle also have plenty of fans because of their versatility. So take your pick. All creatures have specific strengths and weaknesses and your choice should relate to your overall style of play. Personally I like the Horse or Zebra – they're fast across the landscape and pretty quick to learn.

ROLLING ON...
Q Can you tell me how to complete the first level of the *Roller Coaster Tycoon Added Attractions* pack? I know that I should be able to complete this one easily, but for some reason I can't seem to get the combination right, and I always run out of land.
Lenny X, email

A There is a lack of land on this level so you need to make the most of what you've got. Begin by cramming in as many small attractions as you can, and be prepared to get creative with your entrance and exit pathways to save even more space. Finish off by constructing a really exciting rollercoaster that skims over the sea and plummets underground.

FALLING OUT MY SKIN
Q I would like to know what the point of the Brahmin Armour is in *Fallout: Tactics*. If I put it on any of my characters they turn into a cow and cannot attack. Please, what's the story?
Bryan Surgeon, email

A Turn into a cow? No, that's a Brahmin you fool... Anyway, this armour is excellent for Super Mutants and even better for robots. In some cases a robot's damage resistance can increase to 90 per cent. So, there you go – it's for mutants and robots – *that*'s the story.

FIRST BLOOD
Q I'm looking for some help on *Red Alert 2*. I'm playing the sixth mission in the Allied campaign and can't seem to stave off the first Soviet attack. All my prism towers get wiped out in the onslaught and by the time my own troops arrive I'm pretty much dead meat. Is there a better way to survive this initial battle please?
Edward Shale, email

A It's difficult to keep your prism towers intact during these opening attacks by the Soviets. Target tanks rather than infantry though, and be very quick to repair the towers when they are damaged. You can also sell the wall segments behind the eastern pillbox to give your towers a better line of sight. Apart from that, keep practising.

HOLLOW INSIDE
Q Can you give me some cheats for *Agharta: The Hollow Earth* please? I find the game very difficult and really need some help.
Mike Knight, Dunstable

A Oh all right then. During the game type 'tistaafi' for all items, 'debugon' to activate the developer cheat mode and 'debugoff' to turn it off. Have fun.

DEARWANDY

Every month our resident doctor reads your letters and solves your problems.
Think you know better? Write in, sound intelligent, win yourself £50

🔴 HIM AGAIN Phil Wand

> ❝I bought the PC for the rewriter hardware, so I could then create back-ups of my favourite games❞
>
> GUY BAXTER FINDS OUT TOO LATE THAT YOU CAN'T JUST BURN OFF COPIES OF ANY GAME YOU LIKE

🔵 Our Best Budget card, the Hercules 3D Prophet 4500.

PUMP UP THE HERTZ

Q I currently have a Pentium II 350MHz, 128Mb RAM, 12Mb Voodoo2, 8Mb Matrox G200, and an 8Gb hard drive. I've just brought Half-life: Generations and Unreal Tournament, and I want to get the most out of both games by buying a better graphics card. Thing is, every computer shop I go to tries to sell me a different card – so which one should I get? I can spend up to about £200. Also, would I have to upgrade my computer, or would it still be fast enough to play the above games with improved graphics and no slowdown? Any help you could give me would be a godsend as I am at a total loss!
Gareth Hills

A The card that best suits your wallet is our Budget Best Buy video card, the Hercules 3D Prophet 4500 (£100), powered by the KYRO II accelerator. Not only does it lollop along at a fair rate with 64Mb and 175MHz on tap, but the card renders every scene in glorious 32-bit true colour, and in benchmark tests it pummels its Geforce2 MX rival when rendering full-screen anti-aliasing (a technique to get rid of those nasty, jagged lines you get in polygon-based games). However, it does lack some nifty hardware features, such as Transform & Lighting, and isn't much fun if you're into overclocking. If the games you play are DirectX 8 specific – neither Half-Life nor Unreal are, mind you – you may find the GeForce-based Hercules 3D Prophet II MX 32Mb a better buy. As for upgrading your current kit, you should find that with the new card, the games you've bought will zip along just fine. However, I won't try and pretend that 350MHz is going to get you very far if you buy a copy of Black & White. You'll need a new motherboard with a KT133A chipset (about £6D) and a 1GHz AMD Athlon processor (about £9D) before doing that.
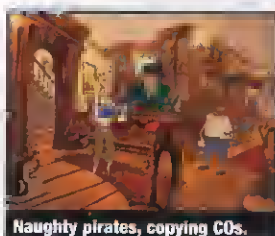
Naughty pirates, copying CDs.

UNWITTING PIRATE

Q I recently purchased a PC from Tiny. It has an AMD Athlon 1GHz processor, 256Mb RAM, 40Gb HDD, 32Mb RAM, a DVD ROM and CD Rewriter. I bought the PC specifically for the rewriter hardware, so I could then create back-ups of my favourite games – they seem to get scratched easily. I've tried copying a game, and the process seems to go just fine, but when I come to play the game from the back-up, a message appears saying, 'Please insert CD'. If I select the install option, it installs fine, but again won't play. I've checked that the copy has the same amount of data as the original – and it has – so it can't be anything missing. My rewriter drive is a Milisumi CD-RW 4 x 4 x 32. I have also copied audio CDs so I can listen to them in the car and they work fine. The blank CDs I'm using are Kodak Ultima Recordable 74min, if that helps.

Also, I have a second computer at home, a Packard Bell PII 333MHz, 64Mb RAM, 10GB HDD, and I'm looking for a way to network them. As my Tiny PC is new, I can't open it up to install a network card – it will terminate the one-year guarantee. I have looked on the Internet, and I found a system that uses a USB cable to connect two PCs, but the longest length that I can find is 10m. I need about 25m. The network will be mainly for games. Please help!
Guy Baxter

A The simple answer here is that you're up against some pretty rudimentary anti-piracy measures. Understandably, developers don't want you making copies of their discs, and although you explain your motives – you want to make a back-up – if you were to make one copy, you could in theory make thousands. And that means big bucks for software pirates at car boot sales. To stop copying, the glass master – the template from which the retail CDs are made – contains deliberate errors that CD writers can't read and thus can't reproduce. When the game runs, the code looks for these imperfections and, if it can't find them, assumes quite correctly that you're not using the original, mastered disc. You are correct in saying that you have all the data, and no doubt you do, but you don't have the anti-piracy measures – and that's what counts! Those of you who tinkered with the B8C Micro back in the '8Ds may recall a number of games that contained unformatted tracks in the middle of the floppy, making any attempt to duplicate it futile. There's no easy way round it, although there are rumours of upgraded CD writer firmware that will allow you to replicate the original exactly. Naughty.

SCUZZY DUCK

Q I have recently acquired a Hewlett Packard DeskJet 3P scanner. I've downloaded the relevant drivers for it from their Internet site, and alas have discovered that I need a SCSI card to get it to work. I was under the impression that you could connect scanners directly via the printer port at the back of the machine – but now it tells me I need a new card. Where can I get this from? Will it be expensive, and, if so, would I just be better off getting a new scanner?
Ricky Miller

A SCSI, pronounced 'scuzzy', is the Small Computer System Interface. Developed by Apple Computer and familiar to Macintosh users worldwide, SCSI allows greater speed and more flexibility than regular parallel interfaces (e.g. the printer port at the rear of your PC). However, what you have is not a Hewlett Packard DeskJet – DeskJet is a range of budget inkjet printers – but a ScanJet, and a rather pants one at that. Its maximum resolution is 300dpi (dots per inch, a rough guide of image quality), and it first rolled off the production lines back in, let's see, 1994? While Windows drivers are available for it, my inclination would be to bin it and buy yourself a parallel port replacement. Go for an HP ScanJet 3400C, which features 9600dpi x 9600dpi resolution – yours for £70. If you have a USB port, the Epson Perfection range comes highly recommended, and entry level models can be had for about £75. A decent Adaptec SCSI card for the ScanJet 3P is going to cost around this much anyway.

🔵 This little baby will talk either parallel or USB.

DING-A-PING

Q Please could you tell me what sort of difference ping makes to playing online games. Me and a couple of friends play Quake II every Sunday night, with me being the server. They connect to my machine and we go at it for a couple of hours. Now, because of the scores we've been getting, I reckon that I'm at an advantage. I see that their pings are around 200-300, and although no-one complains of jerk-o-vision, I'm sure that I have the drop on them. Could you please tell me how this delay affects them, when everything seems smooth to me?
Ade

A While I firmly believe that too many people overplay the ping issue in online gaming – prediction, hand-eye co-ordination and old-fashioned practice are just as important

to your gaming as low latency – the advantage you have over your friends is quite obvious. As the server, you have an effective ping of zero, meaning the game for you is hydraulically smooth and without any quirks. This doesn't mean you have the ability to see things before anyone else – the *Quake* networking code means that, up to around 500ms or so, everyone's view of the game is pretty much identical – but what it does mean is that your key presses and mouse clicks are rendered instantly. Press the fire button and a rocket appears, jump and you leave the ground. For your friends, they will find things a little stilted, and their anticipation of shots that much more difficult. If their pings were dropped to the low 100s, you would have a far tougher time of things – my experience is that a dose of high-lag gaming with low-ping bastards sharpens your instincts markedly. Organise a game over a local network and my money's on them.

JUST A QUICKIE

Q I'm planning on buying a new PC in the near future, and have been looking at some of the Dell PCs. I currently have a Voodoo3 3000 AGP: is this card better or worse than the 32MB NVIDIA GeForce2 GTS that comes with the Dell deal? Also, is the 64Mb GTS Ultra worth the extra £98, or is the difference not really noticeable? Finally is there any point in spending more money on RAM or is 128Mb all I'm ever going to need?
Tom

A The Voodoo3 is shaded, utterly and totally, by the GeForce2 GTS. The Ultra version of the card really ain't worth the

additional outlay, as in any regular, real-world use you won't notice the difference. Finally, 128Mb RAM is just dandy for regular home use. it's perhaps the easiest thing to upgrade on your PC, so you can always get more if you need it. But I'd wager you won't.

BLURRY MADNESS

Q I'm a big online *Midtown Madness 2* player, and I've just upgraded my graphics card to an ATI Radeon 64MB DDR. Since then, the colours aren't right, and the map is kind of blurry. Until recently I was running an S3 Savage4 32Mb card, and everything was fine. And, no, it's not the known T&L problem, because I've turned that off. Since I got the new card I've reinstalled the game – but, alas, that's not helped. The weird thing is, during the game, if I take a screenshot, when I view it back at the Windows desktop, the map is not blurry at all, and the colours are all fine. My friends and I are confused by this problem: we can't figure out why the map is blurry or how to fix it.
Leon Thompson

A A number of people have asked similar questions about their Radeon cards. My belief is that you have Direct3D anti-aliasing turned on and the video hardware is deliberately blurring in order to eliminate the rough edges where the polygons – the fundamental building blocks of most games – meet. First off, you should make sure you have the latest driver set from the ATI site at support.ati.com. Then, right-click on your desktop, click on the Settings tab and hit the Advanced button. Select the ATI D3D page, and make sure anti-aliasing is disabled. Hey presto, no more fuzziness.

Anti-aliasing is a neat feature, but only in the right places.

WATCHDOG

The software industry can sometimes be a closed shop when it comes to complaints. Let *PC ZONE* ramraid their premises for you and snatch some answers

⭐ **FIGHTING FOR YOUR RIGHTS** Adam Phillips

BLUE WITH RAGE!

Q I'm writing regarding the poor customer services of Telewest/Blueyonder, and would like to pass on a warning to fellow *PC ZONE* readers. I've been connected to the Blueyonder high-speed Internet since the start of the year and, apart from a few teething problems, everything was fine up until May 17.

I came to play a bit of *Counter-Strike* and noticed that my cable modem wasn't connecting to the Net. The send and receive lights were flashing on the modem indicating a problem. I phoned tech support and they said that there was nothing they could do over the phone, and they'd have to send an engineer to sort it out.

The earliest an engineer could come out to me was on May 22, between 3pm and 6pm. Now this wasn't really convenient since I work at a university and it was right in the middle of an exam period. But I managed to organise a day off work at short notice and confirmed the appointment.

I took my day off work and waited for the engineer to arrive. I waited… and waited… and waited. At 7pm, I gave up and phoned tech support back to see what happened to the engineer. The person I spoke to looked into what had happened and found out that my appointment had been rescheduled to the following day at 6pm.

This was done without my consent or knowledge. No one phoned to ask me if I was actually available at that time, nor called to tell me that the engineer wasn't going to come. I wasn't free to take the rescheduled appointment so had to wait until May 24, I had to take more time off work.

This time the engineer came round at the correct time and within five minutes had fixed it – there was a small problem with the cable exchange over the road, so he just reconnected the cable.

I emailed Blueyonder tech support on May 24, letting them know I wasn't happy with their customer service and that I wasn't prepared to pay for a whole month considering I'd been messed around so much and had lost two days off work. I got a prompt reply telling me to contact Telewest as they didn't deal with customer problems – only technical problems. On May 29, I emailed Telewest customer services with the same email and still haven't had a reply.

On June 9, my bill for May arrived and it was for the full £33. I wasn't best impressed, so I phoned Telewest direct and spoke to customer services. I was told I needed to speak to Blueyonder customer services, as Telewest didn't deal with the high-speed Internet problems. This is exactly the opposite to what Blueyonder had told me.

Telewest customer services did say that they would look into it in the meantime and that I should expect a call back. I've not had a phonecall from Telewest or Blueyonder since.

So, to recap, I've lost two days of time off work, a week's Internet access, and they've had the cheek to charge me for a complete month. The time I've lost off work is worth more than the bill alone. So to those

WHERE'S ME WOOFA?

WATFORD electronics.COM

Speak to me…

Q I am writing to tell you of my experiences with Watford Electronics, one of the biggest mail order suppliers of PC equipment in the UK. On May 3, I ordered a set of Videologic Digitheatre DTS speakers from them and paid for next-day delivery. When they came on May 4, the four satellite speakers were missing from the box. As it was after 6pm when I got home, the customer services department was shut. When I called on Saturday, I was told it would be looked into ASAP.

Despite the fact that I rang nearly everyday, it took Watford two weeks to arrange for a new set to be sent out. They blamed problems with their supplier for the delay.

I finally got a new set on May 22. However, they had sent me the wrong type. I now face a further wait as they won't send the correct kit until they've received both the incomplete set and the wrong set they sent. So it looks like it will take at least a month for them to fulfil my order.

Is this common practice for Watford Electronics, and what they are going to do about it?

Andrew Lee

A Sounds like you've been left speechless and speaker-tess. We dropped Watford Electronics a line to try and find out what's been going on: "Mr Lee ordered a set of Videologic Digitheatre DTS Speakers on May 3," said a spokesperson for the company. "The warehouse shipped the product. Unfortunately, when the customer received the speakers part of the kit was missing. As soon as we were informed, we arranged for the speakers to be collected and generated a replacement order."

They say the replacement speakers were shipped to you after they experienced a delay in obtaining the speakers from the manufacturers directly: "In error, we dispatched the incorrect speakers. The customer informed us of this and we sent the correct speakers. White replacement orders are automatic policy at Watford Electronics, Mr Lee may have experienced a delay while waiting for new stocks from the manufacturers to come to us, but the delay was not caused by us requiring receipt of the incorrect speakers before dispatch of the correct ones."

Watford Electronics admit they made an error by dispatching the wrong speakers the second time, but are adamant that this was a simple error: "it does not occur on a regular basis. When processing in excess of 1,000 orders a day, minor incidents can occur. An apology email was sent to Mr Lee by one of our customer service advisors."

You should have the correct speakers by now and Watford Electronics says you have not been in contact with them again. They finish off by: "apologising for any inconvenience Mr Lee was caused white his order was subjected to a chain of unfortunate events. Please be assured that this type of problem seldom occurs and that our first priority is to the customer."

"Order! Order! Would someone like to tell me where the hell my speakers are? Mr Blair?" Parliamentary questions, yesterday.

considering Blueyonder, be aware that when it's working, it's great. However, should it go wrong, don't expect too much.

Andrew Lowe

A Telewest says it's sorry to read about your account of unsatisfactory service: "We are disappointed that on this occasion, it appears our customer service has not met the high standards we set ourselves," says a Telewest representative. "We've been in touch with Mr Lowe and

"I was told someone would ring me back by the end of the day. No return call was made "

LEE THOMPSON BEMOANING OABS.COM'S RESPONSE TIME

have now resolved the matter. We've offered a goodwill payment to make amends for his inconvenience."

They round off by saying customer care is of key importance to Telewest: "We are delivering great value broadband access to UK consumers today and are working hard to ensure our service support is on a par with the fast, always-on Internet experience we offer." Great. Just let us know if you have any further problems, Andrew.

MONITOR MOAN

Q I ordered the Iiyama Pro 451 monitor from Dabs.com on May 23, specifying an evening delivery. Four working days later, I rang the customer support line to chase up the order (May 29) as it hadn't arrived and was told it was

likely to have been delayed by the postal strike and Bank Holiday, which is fair enough and perfectly understandable.

However, it hadn't arrived by June 3, so another phone call was required. Dabs told me the order was to be sent direct by their supplier and they'd have to give the supplier a call to chase it up.

The next day I recieved a call back from Dabs who were very apologetic and told me that the order wasn't received by the supplier, that it had now been sent through and that I should receive the monitor in "a couple of days".

It hadn't arrived by the morning of June 11, so I sent Dabs an email – I couldn't bear to wait in their telephone queuing system for another 45 minutes. I told them I had to take delivery before or on June 13, as I'd be away for a few days and no one would be able to accept delivery.

I then rang the next day as I hadn't had a response to the email. I was told someone would ring me back by the end of the day. No return call was made. I did receive a brief email saying the order had been re-keyed into their system and would be delivered on either the Wednesday or Thursday, which demonstrated that they hadn't read my email explaining my absence after Wednesday.

Even worse, I looked at the new order and they'd specified a

SLAM OR SCAM?

Blimey! Talk about opening a can of worms. We mentioned the problems readers had getting their cash back from theslammer.com last month, in conjunction with a PS2 deal the mail order company was offering. We have subsequently received a whole stack of emails from hacked-off punters who are regretting the day they ever signed up for the deal. Here's just one email from the many sent in to us

Q Having just read your article concerning a complaint regarding theslammer.com, I thought I'd let you know there are hundreds of people who have been 'ripped off' bigtime by theslammer.com.

Regarding the half-price PS2 offer, I ordered in the middle of March, two weeks later the money was taken out of my account. To this very day, I have not received a refund or a PS2, and as I ordered via Switch, I cannot get my money back. There are thousands of people who have ordered one thing or another and have not received their goods. On the other hand, there are people who received a PS2, did not get their cash back so then got a full refund via their credit card company – but still have a PS2.

Theslammer.com has since been forced to close its website following the involvement of the Office of Fair Trading and the Department of Trade and Industry. There are also rumours of the Fraud Squad being involved.

A company called IGI Investments are due to complete the takeover of theslammer.com's website at the end of August, although for people like me, who are minus £300 and have lost all trust in online shopping – we are the big losers.

Sandy

A According to an article that appeared at The Register website last month, Trading Standards are investigating customer allegations. Watchdog did try and drop in at the slammer.com website but couldn't get through. We will be bringing you a full report shortly . In the meantime, vexed punters have been unloading their anger at www.thescammer.com, a site set up to bring angry customers together...

Finally, come what may of theslammer.com and any investigations, it is worth us pointing out that if you are going to buy goods online, please use a credit card if at all possible so you can claim a refund if something goes wrong.

daytime delivery, which was no good to me as I'm at work during the day. Obviously they hadn't bothered to check the original delivery method, or they would have seen I had asked for an evening delivery.

So here I am, 13 working days on from the day I placed the order – an order that was meant to be delivered within three working days – and I am nearly £400 out of pocket. I've spent each of those 13 working evenings stuck in my house waiting for delivery and I

⊘ Trapped in Monitor Hell.

feel very mucked about by Dabs. I have just sent them another email asking them to either change the delivery time to the evening or to cancel the order if they cannot.

I have placed many orders with Oabs in the past and up until now they've exceeded my expectations. I think in future I will have to place my orders with someone else as Dabs seem to have just made one mistake after another with this one.

Lee Thompson

A We dropped Dabs a line and they were on the blower to us almost immediately with the following explanation: "We would like to apologise to Mr Thompson for the obvious inconvenience we have caused him on this occasion," offered a representative of the company. "By way of explanation – and not an excuse – when Mr Thompson placed his order, our purchasing system put this through on a direct drop from the manufacturer. This meant that even though he had asked

for an evening delivery, this did not occur as it would have done it if had left our warehouse. Subsequently, his replacement order suffered a similar fate."

Dabs claims that they are currently revising aspects of their internal system to give them greater flexibility with delivery time slots: "We accept that we have not exceeded expectations on this occasion but can assure Mr Thompson that this was an exception and not the rule, and that he can be confident that Dabs will continue to improve its high levels of service."

They concluded by telling us that as a gesture of goodwill, they would like to offer you a discount on a future order with free delivery: contact matherton@dabs.com. And please don't forget to include your account number, details and so forth. We wouldn't want just anyone taking advantage of the offer.

READ ME

If you are writing in to complain about a product, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers. It means we can resolve your problems much quicker.

PCZONE TOP 100

Welcome to the definitive buyer's guide for all PC Gamers. The following games are the best 100 games money can buy, split into genres to make your purchases even easier

Have you got money burning a hole in your pocket? If so, make a cheque or postal order payable to *PC ZONE* and we'll forget about writing the mag and get ourselves down the pub for a good drink-up. If you're not feeling altruistic then perhaps you might want to buy yourself a game, but which one? How can you sort the *Unreal Tournament* from the *Daikatana*? Relax, this is where the *PC ZONE* Top 100 comes in handy.

Every game listed here is worth buying. If you're a fan of a certain genre you can head straight for your favourite games, which are ranked in order of brilliance. Some of the games might be a bit long in the tooth but that shouldn't put you off. Most of the old-timers have been re-released on budget and you'll be able to find the rest pretty cheap if you shop around.

The rules are pretty simple. Each month we review a load of games. If any of them are good enough to enter the Top 100 they take their rightful place and the bottom one in that particular genre

is consigned to the dustbin never to return again. As games are always improving, we re-evaluate all the titles in a genre every time there is a new entry.

Each month we'll also show you the games that we think are the Top 10 of all time. This month deputy editor Richie Shoemaker gets the chance to talk about all the games that he plays when he should be writing stuff for the mag.

WHEN WE SAY CLASSIC, WE MEAN IT

If a game gets a Classic rating (90 per cent or above) in *PC ZONE* you know it's going to be pretty spectacular. Unlike other organs, we don't shower Classics around like confetti at a royal wedding and you won't find one in every single issue. In fact, of all the games released this year, only four have

been deemed worthy of our gold award, and that includes *Max Payne*, who won't even enter the Top 100 until next month.

Classics have to have something a bit different. They have to take the genre to new heights or impress with originality. For this reason you should also pay special attention

to the games that receive our Award Of Excellence (80–89 per cent). When we say excellent, we mean excellent, and if you're a fan of the genre these games fall into you won't be disappointed. Put your faith in us and we won't let you down, and that's a promise.
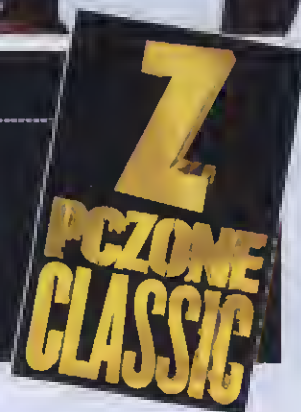
FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE

BENCHMARK GAME
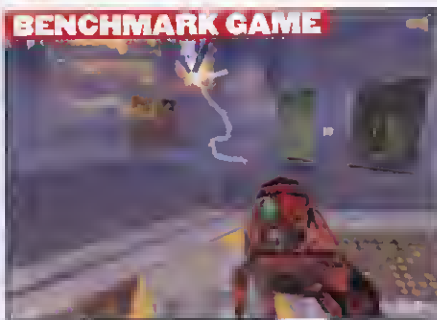
PCZ #71 · 95%

○ Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere end some of the best AI ever coded. *Half-Life* is probably still the best game you can install on your PC, and it's now available with the superb *Opposing Force* add-on in the *Generations* pack.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

UNREAL TOURNAMENT   PCZ #81 · 90%

○ Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake III*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8188
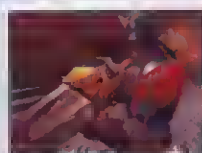
QUAKE III ARENA   PCZ #87 · 89%

○ The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but sadly the lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.
PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING   PCZ #1D1 · 85%

○ This atmospheric game is one of the most unsettling FPSs we've seen. The graphics and superb sound will have you leaping out of your seat. Here's hoping 8arker's contribution will help push the future of narrative and gameplay forward.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

GUNMAN CHRONICLES   PCZ #97 · 84%

○ While comparisons to *Half-Life* are inevitable, *Gunman* contains more than enough nuances to stand out on its own merits. With a superb array of weapons, intense battles and a gripping atmosphere it's a must-have for any fan of the genre.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

PROJECT IGI   PCZ #97 · 84%

○ Combining the action of *Soldier Of Fortune* with the stealth of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Project IGI* is the thinking man's FPS. It features vast, open landscapes, and its clever changes of pace and espionage-oriented storyline will keep you engrossed throughout.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000
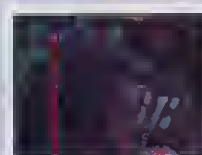
STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FDRCE   PCZ #94 · 84%

○ The first single-player game to use the *Quake III* engine, *Voyager* offers enough thrills to please even the hardest of Trekkie haters. A new scripting system and some clever CPU team-mates give renewed credence to solo play in this increasingly multiplayer genre.
PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143 525

SERIOUS SAM   PCZ #102 · 81%

○ *Serious Sam* is e game that's seriously good fun. You get more monsters than you could ever wish for – they come out of the walls, the floor, pretty much everywhere. A good old-fashioned, arcade-style shooter, with a liberal dose of humour.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

MECHWARRIOR 4: VENGEANCE   PCZ #99 · 80%

○ This fourth offering in the popular combat series is a feast of superb graphics, challenging missions and er… realistic snow. The multiplayer option is great and features some excellent team-based modes, but like all big robot games, it's still only likely to sell in the US.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 5700 2000
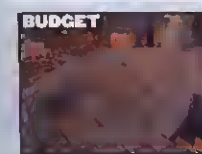
THIEF II: THE METAL AGE   PCZ #88 · 80%

○ The original *Thief* set new standards in FPS titles with its move away from mindless action towards stealth end its excellent use of light and sound. This sequel delivers more of the same quality gameplay, minus the out-of-place zombie levels.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

STRATEGY

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #89 · 9D%

○ Take command of enormous armies and engage in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate generals and conquer your way through the map of feudal Japan. The 3D engine works beautifully end the in-game options don't get in the way of the instant playability of this game. *Shogun* will simply blow you away.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134
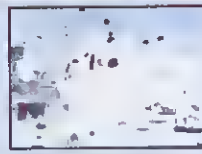
Z: STEEL SOLDIERS   PCZ #1D1 · 90%

○ *Z* will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast-paced in-yer-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The AI is superb, and as it's entirely mouse-driven, it's simple and easy to get into. What more could you ask for?
PUBLISHER EON • 0700 4366344

CDSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS   PCZ #101 · 89%

○ There are 8,000 troops et your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement and a 3D landscape with real physics modelling make it truly absorbing. With great graphics and sound effects to boot it's an essential purchase.
PUBLISHER CDV • 020 8880 4144

AOEII: COLLECTDRS' EDITION   PCZ #84 · 88%

○ It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *AOEII*, the gameplay is honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single- and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tiberian Sun* and try this classic RTS.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 5700 2000

GRDUND CONTROL   PCZ #92 · 86%

○ RTSs are increasingly dropping resource management in order to concentrate on strategy. *Ground Control* pulls this off with flair, gorgeous looks and a brilliant camera. If you're after a 3D strategy title but don't fancy samurais, this is the answer.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

SUDDEN STRIKE PCZ #96 · 85%

○ *Sudden Strike* mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism in order to create a compelling RTS. Its clever resource management, huge selection of units and separate campaigns make it a must for RTS fans looking for something e bit different.
PUBLISHER CDV • 020 8880 4144
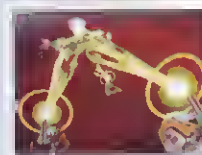
HOMEWDRLD: CATACLYSM   PCZ #96 · 85%

○ Relic's mission to improve the already superb 3D RTS *Homeworld* has proved to be a great success. The *Homeworld* universe has been expanded, providing e more elaborate storyline and greater scope for tacticel options than its predecessor.
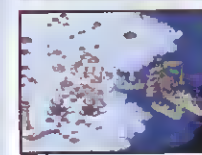**PUBLISHER** Vivendi • 01189 209100
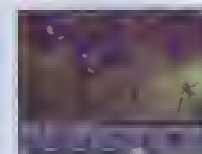
EARTH 2150   PCZ #9D · 84%

○ A fantastic 3D engine and great detail team up with sheer playability to make this one of the best RTS games around. *Earth 2150* is a more traditional strategy title than the likes of *Shogun*, and it has the rare quality of actually advancing the genre.
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

C&C: RED ALERT 2   PCZ #95 · 82%

○ After the disappointment of *Tiberian Sun* we weren't expecting much from this sequel, but we were pleasantly surprised. *RA2* manages to mix a believable storyline with enhanced gameplay and extremely versatile units. An entertaining sequel.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

IMPERIUM GALACTICA II   PCZ #85 · 79%

○ Space expansion and empire building have never looked so good. This title boasts the depth of a turn-based strategy game with the immediate ection of real-time, plus a great interface and tutorial, which means you'll know your way round in no time.
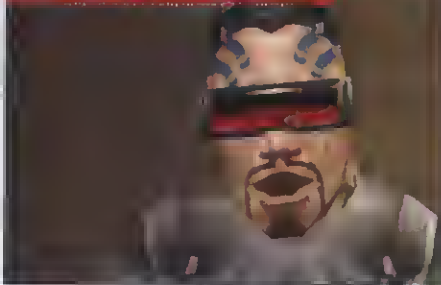**PUBLISHER** Infogrames • 020 7738 8188

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DEUS EX

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #93 • 94%

○ Warren Spector takes the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* and weaves an RPG of complex beauty that revolutionises computer games. A fascinating sci-fi plot and complete player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is such a landmark wonder.
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

SYSTEM SHOCK 2   PCZ #80 • 91%

○ Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE REDEMPTION   PCZ #92 • 89%

○ This amazing RPG is a treat to play. An epic storyline, tactical combat and great acting and *music* more than make up for the fact that it's a linear hack 'n' slash game at heart.
PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT   PCZ #87 • 87%

○ An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG. Moreover, the character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

BALOUR'S GATE II   PCZ #96 • 85%

○ The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. Although this sequel is not vastly different, it is bigger, better and extremely addictive. *Baldur's Gate II* is a must for all RPG fans.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

ARCANUM   PCZ #106 84%

NEW ENTRY Whether you play through as a mage or as a techy, you'll still find *Arcanum* hugely entertaining. Don't let its looks fool you – it has a great plot and flexible character development. A massive and addictive game.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

ANANCHRONDX   PCZ #105 • 83%

The release of *Anachronox* proves *Deus Ex* wasn't a fluke for Ion Storm. OK, it's not as good, but it's an interesting and genuinely funny game in its own right, and we don't get to say that about many games. Well worth a punt.
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

FINAL FANTASY VII   PCZ #66 • 80%

○ Despite the release of *FFVIII*, we still rate this earlier episode in the series above it. The story is better, there are more sub-games and the whole thing is more involving, especially if you like Japanese-style cartoony graphics. And it's now on budget release.
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

FALLOUT 2   PCZ #71 • 79%

○ Twice as big as the original, but utilising the same engine. If you liked the first game, you'll love this – and if you don't already own the original, you can now pick up both of these life-sapping RPGs for less than a tenner.
**PUBLISHER** Interplay • 0207 551 4266

ICEWIND DALE   PCZ #93 • 75%

○ Despite the introduction of larger enemies, *Icewind Dale* is little more than an add-on pack for *Baldur's Gate*. It looks the same and it plays the same, which isn't surprising as it's made by the same people. Very good, but no competition to *Baldur's Gate II*.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 0207 5514266

ACTION/ADVENTURE

GRIM FANDANGO

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #71 • 88%

○ If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic of its genre. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and, if your mind doesn't work laterally, you'll be playing it until the day you die.
PUBLISHER LucasArts • 020 7368 2255

DISCWORLD NOIR   PCZ #79 • 87%

○ Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and is all the better for it. In our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Terry Pratchett's zany, off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060
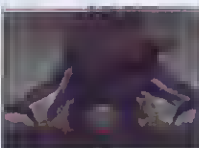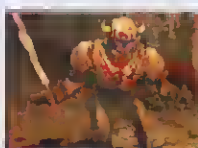
SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS   PCZ #98 • 87%

○ Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside of *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and console-style combos.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

THE NOMAD SOUL   PCZ #83 • 86%

○ Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost manages to pull it off.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

HITMAN: CODENAME 47   PCZ #98 • 85%

○ Bringing back memories of *Leon* and *Day Of The Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the cool excitement of carrying out a contract. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in your victims' uniforms and walk away from explosions with calm elegance.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

BLAIR WITCH VOL 1: RUSTIN PARR   PCZ #96 • 84%

○ As well as being a truly scary action/horror title, this is one of the finest action/adventure games we've played. The suspense is incredible, and a constant stream of jump-out-of-your-seat moments will leave you with a distinct lack of clean underwear.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE   PCZ #84 • 83%

○ LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest Indy game, with the adventure elements still in place. Not bad, but not for traditionalists.
PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND   PCZ #98 • 82%

○ One of the hardest skills to master when developing a game is the ability to make your audience genuinely laugh with you rather than at you and, undoubtedly, *Escape From Monkey Island* is one of the most genuinely funny games to come out in the last couple of years.
PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

DEEP SPACE NINE: THE FALLEN   PCZ #98 • 82%

○ It's not often a game with little promise on paper surprises us so nicely. *DS9* is a third-person action/adventure that offers you the chance to control Sisko, Kira or Worf. Gameplay is different for each character, which provides longevity in spades.
**PUBLISHER** Infinite Loop/Koch • 01256 707767
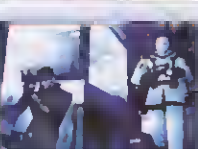
METAL GEAR SOLID   PCZ #96 • 82%

○ Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses makes it stand out from the majority of similar PC titles.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

RACING GAMES

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

BENCHMARK GAME
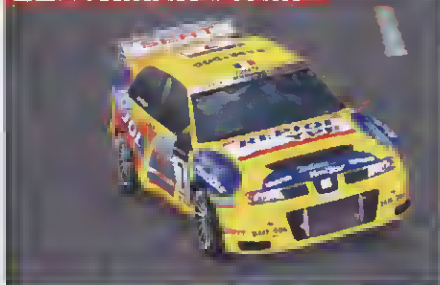
PCZ #98 · 86%

With all the rally games available it was always going to be interesting to see how 2.0 would fare. Unsurprisingly, it blows away the competition. The graphics are superb, the detail all-encompassing and the car handles beautifully. If you have been waiting patiently for the definitive rally game, this is definitely it.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

PCZ #96 · 84%
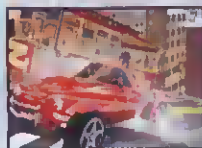
Buckle up for some high-speed action, as you race around London and San Francisco in this sequel. You won't find a more entertaining arcade driving game. The original MM was a belter, but with more cars and races and improved controls, MM2 is now the daddy.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

F1 CHAMPIONSHIP: SEASON 2000

PCZ #97 · 82%

While lacking the detailed realism of GP3, EA's latest F1 offering provides more fun and adrenalin-pumping moments than any other PC F1 game. With its mixture of arcade action and realism it is both accurate and easy to pick up.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

LE MANS 24 HOURS

PCZ #87 · 81%

Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, Le Mans 24 Hours is a driving game for skilful players who know their brakes from their elbows. You can even get involved in a rewarding career mode, culminating in the famous race itself.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

GRAND PRIX 3

PCZ #94 · 80%

This F1 title displays all the customary Crammond perfectionism. The detail is amazing, which makes it all the more puzzling as to why there is no teamwork. Don't expect much more than a 3D accelerated GP2, but if that's what you're after you'll love it.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

INSANE

PCZ #97 · 78%

Primarily an online racing game, Insane allows you and your friends to indulge in some off-road racing mayhem in a range of different vehicles. Its wide selection of races will have you in hysterics, but the novelty does wear off pretty quickly.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

NEED FOR SPEED PORSCHE 2000

PCZ #90 · 78%

Not as good as hooking up with your mates at the arcade, but still a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car around the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this exciting?
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

RALLY MASTERS

PCZ #89 · 77%
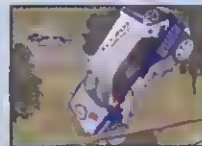
Rally games tend to blend into one another quite seamlessly. After all, the cars look exactly the same and they go round the same tracks. Rally Masters, however, offers the all-important feel of a great driving game together with loads of options and some tasty graphics.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

TOCA 2

PCZ #76 · 76%

Predictably, Codemasters has gone and done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make TOCA 2 an essential purchase for petrolheads. Graphically, it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it definitely is.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

PCZ #84 · 75%

Close, but no McRae. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it's let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.
PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855015

GOD GAMES

BLACK & WHITE

BENCHMARK GAME
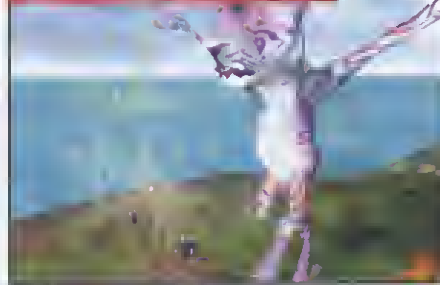
PCZ #100 · 95%

One of our joint top games of all time, Black & White is worth the hype and more. Hundreds of challenges through wondrous landscapes, packed full of spectacular AI-enhanced creatures and some genuinely original ideas. Sell your friends and family if you have to, but get a copy of this game. Pure genius.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

CALL TO POWER II

PCZ #98 · 85%
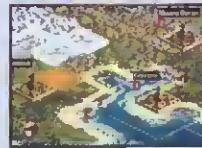
Civilization II is one of the best games of all time, but that doesn't mean it doesn't need updating. It might not have the official Civ endorsement, but Call To Power II still retains the spirit of the game, while polishing almost every aspect of the gameplay.
PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

THE SIMS

PCZ #87 · 85%
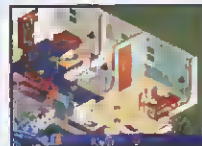
This offers a staggering amount of possibilities. Essentially, you create your own person, or family, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. It's the definitive docu-soap and makes for compelling gameplay.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

CAESAR III

PCZ #70 · 84%

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

SIMCITY 3000

PCZ #74 · 83%

Ten years on, SimCity remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings and an enhanced transport system, SimCity 3000 is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.
PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01932 450134

ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS

PCZ #97 · 83%

From the creators of Pharaoh and Caesar III comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. It is highly addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and a poor combat system.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON

PCZ #75 · 82%

Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden dippers to Nemesis-style, white-knuckle gurners, RollerCoaster Tycoon is hugely addictive. Be warned.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8060

DUNGEON KEEPER 2

PCZ #79 · 75%

Dungeon Keeper was a great idea. DKII takes the essence of the original game, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and doses the myriad of features with a wise hand. And it keeps us very happy indeed.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING

PCZ #70 · 74%

The original Populous was the game that put Bullfrog into orbit and made Peter Molyneux one of the biggest names in the industry. Even 'Peterless', the Bullfrog team proved they can do just as well without him.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

THEME HOSPITAL

PCZ #71 · 73%

We were sceptical at first. How can a sim game involving building hospitals be fun? But it is fun, damn fun. Building bigger and better hospitals and finding a cure for all our ills, including hairyitus, bloaty head and – the bane of all human existence – Elvis impersonators.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

# SPORTS

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 00/01

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #96 · 93%

This update for the greatest management game ever sees the series improve yet again. New features include increased media involvement, greater backroom staff participation, a live league table and more player information. All this adds to the game's addictiveness, which will once again drain you of your free time and take over your life.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000
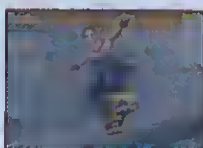
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2 — PCZ #98 · 88%

Pro Skater 2 is an unbelievable experience. The sense of speed and balance is uncanny, and there is almost as much satisfaction to be had from pulling off an acrobatic new move as there is from watching your skater break all his bones as he smashes his face against the concrete.
PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

VIRTUAL POOL 3 — PCZ #99 · 85%

VP3 has the perfect physics and graphics of its predecessors plus some cool new features, including multiplayer options, career mode and training videos by pool diva Jeanette Lee. It's the best pool sim you can buy, and it's almost as good as the real thing.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

FIFA 2001 — PCZ #97 · 83%

Once again the FIFA franchise gets its yearly makeover. There are only minor improvements over the last version, but it's still the best football game for the PC. The player animations and presentation are spot on, but we can't help feeling there's a better football game to come.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134
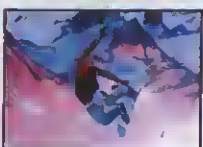
SUPREME SNOWBOARDING — PCZ #85 · 83%

Snowboarding is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without the risk of breaking a leg. Oh, and all the streetwise attitude you'd expect is there too, of course.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000 — PCZ #92 · 82%

It's really not much different from last year's title, but this edition has enough subtle tweaks to make it a worthwhile purchase. It also has the best control system we've seen in what is definitely the best golf game available.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100
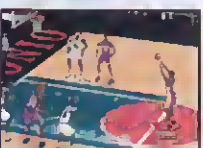
NBA LIVE 2000 — PCZ #85 · 82%

As slick as always, but what makes this special is the inclusion of teams from the '50s onwards, comedy haircuts and all. It's not quite as immediate as *Inside Drive*, but is a more complete simulation of the sport all round.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

OPEN TENNIS 2000 — PCZ #92 · 80%

Not since Super Tennis on the SNES have we had so much fun hitting a ball back and forth over a net. After some initial reluctance the whole office stopped fragging and started lobbing. For a near identical game with slightly better AI and more bugs, it's worth checking out *Roland Garros French Open 2001*. **PUBLISHER** Cryo • 0121 250 5070

JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL 2 — PCZ #68 · 78%

The finest snooker simulation on the PC. Chalk your cue and take on the PC or your mates and, when you're tired of the baize, you can move round and have a go on the fully featured darts board instead. Saves going down to the Working Men's Club.
PUBLISHER Virgin/Interplay • 020 7551 4266

ACTUA SOCCER 3 — PCZ #72 · 72%

If you can't get on with *FIFA* then *Actua* is the second port of call for footy fans. It plays a faster game and there's a good range of options and a huge number of teams to play against, which goes a long way to helping maintain its shelf life.
PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: COLD WAR CRISIS

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #104 · 90%

The most anticipated military game of the year was worth all the hype and more. This squad-based shooter can be played in both third- and first-person and is the ultimate military simulation package, with a stunning atmosphere and superb mission structures. Lock yourself away because this game deserves your full attention.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS — PCZ #79 · 88%

BUDGET

You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that comes closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. It grabs you by the balls from the first mission and doesn't let up.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

HOSTILE WATERS — PCZ #101 · 87%

A brilliant RTS/action game that you can play purely strategically or leap into a unit and get up close and personal to the action. It's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options though. Why make love when you can make war?
PUBLISHER Rage • 01512 372200
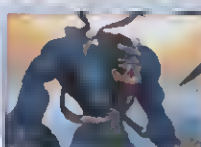
GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO — PCZ #95 · 85%

This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game includes third-person shooter, RTS, RPG and real-time combat elements. It also features a superbly balanced multiplayer option and almost naked women, which usually makes for a good time.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

SWAT 3: ELITE EDITION — PCZ #97 · 84%

AI doesn't come much better. The spectacular graphics and command system come alive here. Although not as fun as *Counter-Strike*, it's more realistic, and features five new maps and countless weapon configurations.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100
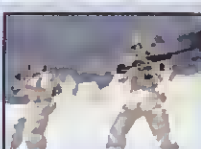
SPEC OPS 2 — PCZ #84 · 82%

When *Spec Ops 2* came out it challenged *Hidden & Dangerous* for the top spot. The game puts you in charge of a four-man green beret squad intent on staying alive and shooting the enemy in the head. Incredibly realistic, with top-notch sound.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

WARGASM — PCZ #71 · 81%

BUDGET

Famed for its flight sims, DID finally delivers an action game only it could produce. With helicopters, APCs and hapless infantry running about, this is as fast-paced as a tank game could be – and it's even better to share.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8000

RAINBOW SIX GOLD PACK EDITION — PCZ #81 · 81%

A landmark game in third-person action strategy games that was only surpassed by *Hidden & Dangerous*. Take control of your elite anti-terrorist squad, plan your missions ahead and indulge in some old fashioned killing. Also contains the *Eagle Watch* add-on pack
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 854 444

BATTLEZONE 2 — PCZ #84 · 79%

Stunning graphics and a winning blend of strategy and first-person action in this sequel to the highly acclaimed *Battlezone*. A smooth gaming engine and a good variety of missions means the fight for world domination never looked so good.
PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR — PCZ #99 · 69%

It might not be a *Counter-Strike* or a *Project IGI*, however the *Delta Force* series does have a loyal following who will probably buy it anyway. Superb multiplayer action and challenging on the highest difficulty level, but unfortunately dodgy AI.
PUBLISHER Novalogic • 020 7405 1777

FLIGHT SIMS

BATTLE OF BRITAIN
BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #99 · 89%

Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, the skies are crowded and the flight models actually 'feel right'. Even though the graphics and general gameplay may not be ground-breaking, *Battle Of Britain* is one of the best examples of a game that transports you right into the cockpit. Tally ho!
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive · 020 8343 7337

FALCON 4
PCZ #72 · 88%

We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure.
PUBLISHER Infogrames · 0161 8278060

B-17: THE MIGHTY 8TH
PCZ #96 · 87%

B17 reproduces the experience of piloting a WWII bomber. Everything's covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks.
PUBLISHER Infogrames · 0161 8278060

COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2
PCZ #97 · 87%

If WWII dogfighting is your thing, then this is the game you have been waiting for. Its excellent user interface, engrossing campaigns, intense combat and superb graphics create a true sense of excitement and realism.
PUBLISHER Microsoft · 0845 7002000

EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON
PCZ #103 · 85%

Finally a flight sim that values the 'flight' aspect over the 'sim' so you can just enjoy the gameplay. *Tycoon* marks the future of the genre where the campaign engine takes care of itself while you play at being Tom Cruise.
PUBLISHER Rage Software · 0151 237 2200

SPACE COMBAT

X – GOLD
BENCHMARK GAME
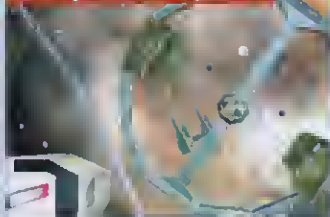
PCZ #82 · 87%

The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side of the gameplay may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. This title is deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.
PUBLISHER THQ · 01483 767656

TERMINUS
PCZ #93 · 86%
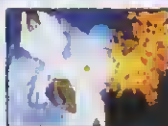
Who says the days of bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and passion. It just edges out *FreeSpace 2*. Available from www.macgames.co.uk.
PUBLISHER Vicarious Visions · www.vvisions.com

FREESPACE 2
PCZ #84 · 85%

Completely different from *X*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, an epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.
PUBLISHER Interplay · 020 7551 4266

EDGE OF CHAOS: INDEPENDENCE WAR 2 PCZ #104 · 83%

It's likely to appeal more to die-hard space simmers, but *Edge Of Chaos* still takes steps to advancing the genre. Its graphics and absorbing free-form gaming are inspirational.
PUBLISHER Infogrames · 0161 827 8000

X-WING: ALLIANCE
BUDGET

PCZ #77 · 81%

At last. Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode of the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best-looking *X-Wing* game to date, *Alliance* is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.
PUBLISHER Activision · 08705 143525

ALL-TIME CLASSICS
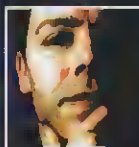
In no particular order (except the first), *PC ZONE*'s deputy editor Richie Shoemaker gives us his all-time top ten games

ELITE (BBC)

There are only a handful of games that can claim to have stood the test of time and the space-trading epic known as *Elite* is one of them. Not that I'm saying I'd play it today, you understand, but it's the only game I've happily played on every computer system I've owned. Best game ever made. Bar none.
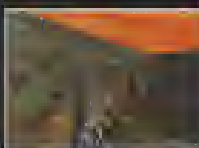
DOOM (PC)

Doom or *Duke*? I've been wrestling with this one for days. Even though I completed *Duke Nukem* and enjoyed every minute, there was something unnerving in its unashamed misogyny, like you needed a shower after playing it. *Doom* however, especially the first episode, was pure uncomplicated gameplay. *Doom* it is then.

LORDS OF MIDNIGHT (Spectrum)

It still amazes me how so much game could be crammed into just a few kilobytes, and in *Lords Of Midnight* we not only had a game boasting thousands of locations, but one that was in 3D as well. And, *and* it was the first successful mixture of strategy, role-playing and adventure. Well smart, brill, fab and skill.

STARQUAKE (Spectrum)

It is to my eternal shame that I never actually bought a copy of *Starquake*. Instead I copied it off the school 'taper', who stuck it on a compilation along with the likes of *Nonterraqueus* and some Level 9 adventure that refused to load. Consequently if Mr Steven Crowe would like to get in touch, I would gladly hand over £6.99.

HALF-LIFE (PC)

When I joined *PC ZONE* I remember being shown a preview version of *Half-Life* and I thought it was the most amazing game I'd ever seen. It took another 18 months for the finished version to arrive, but it was worth the wait. Without it there would have been no *Counter-Strike* and then where would we be? Outside in the sun, probably.

LASER SQUAD (Spectrum)

Though it embarrasses me to admit it, I was something of a mild *Warhammer 40K* fan a few years back and in the absence of a decent *Warhammer* game, *Laser Squad* managed to fill the time quite nicely. In fact, it's thanks to *Laser Squad* that I managed to wean myself off *Warhammer*. Saved by the Gollops yet again.
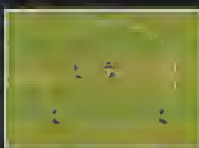
SENSIBLE SOCCER (Atari ST)

While everyone at University was playing *Wolfenstein 3D* on their new 286s, I was stuck with my old Atari ST, but at least I could afford to go out. On those cold winter evenings, however, with a couple of mates in tow, who could resist a *Sensi* tourney, followed by a quick blast of two-player *International Karate*. Ah, happy days.

SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD (PC)

I've never been good at adventures, be they text, icon-driven or SCUMM. From *Bored Of The Rings* to *Day Of The Tentacle*, every adventure I've played I have failed to complete – except *Sam & Max*. Not because it was a particularly good adventure, but because it was so funny that I felt happy to cheat my way through.
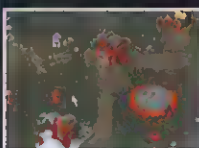
C&C: RED ALERT (PC)

Well, yes, *Dune 2* started it all and was great, then *C&C* came along and everyone went soft, but for me it was *Red Alert* that crowned the lot. Same old select and direct RTS action of course, but this time with guard dogs, which in my book goes a long way. Why Westwood took them out for the sequel is a mystery to me.

CHUCKIE EGG (BBC)

Platforms, ladders, enemy creatures following set patterns (in this case giant chickens) – put them together and you end with your typical early-'80s platformer. However, *Chuckie Egg* is anything but typical: crude graphics even back then, insidious music and faultless level design conspired to create the finest coin-op there never was.

RETRO ZONE

RICHIE SHOEMAKER, DAVE WOODS AND MIKE ANDERIESZ TAKE A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

3D ANT ATTACK

When insects ruled the world

If you ever owned a ZX Spectrum, chances are one of the first games to rock your world was *3D Ant Attack*. Penned by Scottish design student, Sandy White, *Ant Attack* was tha first isometric 3D game and arguably the first survival horror game, too.

White was the typical 8-bit hero, a self-taught programmer inspired by the movie *Superman* to code a city flyby only to see it morph into an epic struggle against giant ants. *Ant Attack* was signed to Quiksilva in 1982 and released the following year when it stormed to number one.

"I think the cottage industry of the time was driven by programming innovation," says White. "If you were the first to get a new sound out of the sound hardware, you could wrap a game around it, and sell it off the back of that. It would be difficult to do that now; technical development has become quite incremental. The selling point now is gameplay, as it should be – or breast size, which I'm not so sure about," he adds.

Ant Attack was one of the first games to spawn a sequel, the hugely underrated *Zombie Zombie*, although a third game (*Eye Of The Mask*) took too long to develop and sold poorly. "By the time I finished my third Speccy game," he recalls, "the fun had gone out of it and I was producing crap, so I stopped, but I only dropped out of games, not out of life." These days, White is involved in the financial sector. So could he be tempted by new hardware to try his hand at *Ant Attack 2002*? Probably not.

"Unfortunately," he warns, "to do a proper, up-to-date sequel to *Ant Attack* would be a full-scale commercial enterprise, and would cost as much to do as to develop any new game... guessing here... between 0.5 and 2 million quid."

Still, a lot more money has been wasted on worse ideas than that. Interested publishers can contact him at **www.sandywhite.co.uk**, where you can also try out a version of the original game.

Ant Attack required more key commands than a flight sim.
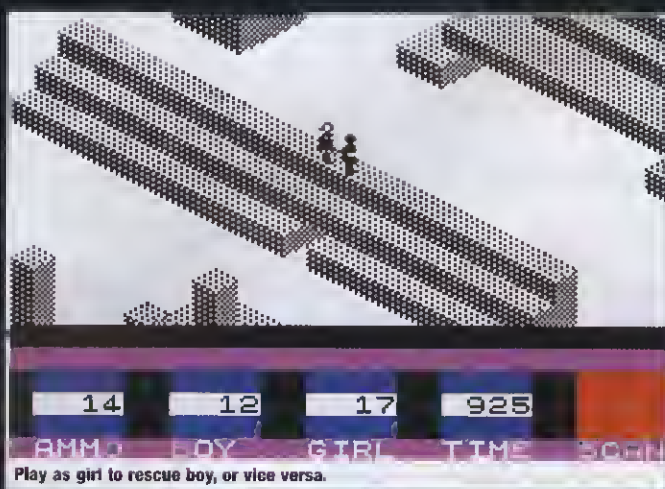
Play as girl to rescue boy, or vice versa.

THE BEST OF THE REST

COOKIE (Spectrum)

Jetpac, *Pssst*, *Trans Am* and finally *Cookie*, the first four games from legendary UK coders Ultimate, later to become Rare, providing N64 owners with the likes of *GoldenEye*, *Perfect Dark* and *Conker's Bad Fur Day*. Shame it only deals with Nintendo these days, but it was pretty much the same back on the old Spectrum. Geniuses.

DONKEY KONG II (Game & Watch)

If you didn't own an authentic flipcase Game & Watch by 1983 you were in serious danger of having your National Health glasses broken while someone sat on your chest and connected the dots on your face with a marker pen. The original *DK* was *the* classic Game & Watch, but you could get away with this sequel, as it had beartraps.

ULTIMA III: EXODUS (PC)

Just to prove the four-colour PC could do more then play arcade conversions of *Burgertime* and *Battlezone*, Richard Garriott's third *Ultima* RPG yet again broke more ground, introducing players to party-based adventuring and turn-based combat for the first time. The game even introduced ship-to-ship combat.
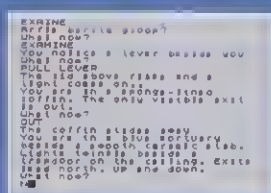
SNOWBALL (BBC, Spectrum, C64)

Melbourne House changed the face of adventure gaming with *The Hobbit* earlier this year, but for those wanting a real challenge, Level 9 (of *Colossal Adventure* fame) were the real deal in the adventure game world. *Snowball* was their first sci-fi adventure, offering 7,000 locations set within a massive spaceship to get lost in.
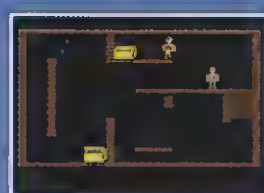
CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN (C64, PC)

Yes, you read that right. Without *Castle Wolfenstein* there would have been no *Wolfenstein 3D*, no *Doom*, no *Quake* and no first-person action games. Utter rubbish of course, but at least now you can impress your friends with the fact that *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* will actually be the fourth in a series that is nearly 20 years old.

<< STOP PRESS >>

GAMING NEWS FOR JANUARY '83
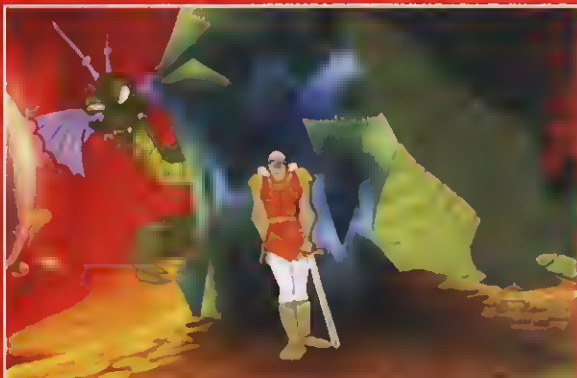
Dragon's Lair, who said it would never catch on?

A Sinclair C5 next to a Mini. Can you tell which is which?

⊙ Nearing release was the Currah Microspeech for the Spectrum. Plugged into the interface port, the Microspeech allowed Sinclair's machine to play crude speech. Similar oddities were to follow, including the SpecDrum from Cheetah and a bizarre steering wheel device cunningly disguised as an ashtray that you rolled across the keyboard.

⊙ Able to now support those new-fangled hard drives, Microsoft released MS-DOS 2.0 and announced Windows, a poncy graphical interface. Curiously, IBM didn't show much interest.

⊙ Everyone was talking about Laserdisc coin-op games, with *Dragon's Lair* machines slowly creeping into a few b[..] arcades

across the country. However, within a year Laserdisc games were dismissed as just a gimmick.

⊙ It was last knockings for the Sinclair ZX-81 as the company announced a price cut, just as WH Smiths decided to stop selling ZX-81 software. Available for £45, including the 16K RAM pack, the ZX-81 was repackaged as the ideal starting machine for computer hobbyists. It was to be a miserable Christmas for thousands of kids.

⊙ Clive Sinclair, who had recently become a Sir, unveiled his new company Sinclair Vehicles, soon to produce the ill-fated C5 electric car.

TOP 5 1983

SPECTRUM GAMES

1 FLIGHT SIMULATOR

2 JETPAC

3 PENETRATOR

4 TRANSYLVANIAN TOWER

5 THE HOBBIT

⊙ *Chart from Sinclair User*

Jetpac at number 2! Sacrilege!
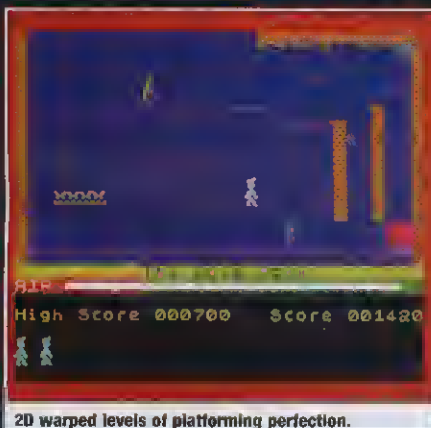
2D warped levels of platforming perfection.

And now for something completely different.

MANIC MINER

Willy's first outing

It wasn't the easiest game to start playing. First you had to squint at a specially designed security manual (and pray one of your mates had a magnifying glass to read the tiny print). After that you had to hope your tape recorder would hold out until it had finished loading. But, then you were in, greeted by a twisted metallic version of the *Blue Danube* and the face of gaming was changed forever. A rip-off of the old *Miner 2049'er*, *Manic Miner* was one of the first games to stretch the Spectrum to its eight-colour limits. Put simply, it's a classic that can still hold its own (for ten minutes every other month) today.

All the elements of a successful platform game were introduced by *Miner Willy*: pixel-perfect

jumping, 20 simple yet infuriatingly designed levels that relied on reflexes and timing, in-game music (*Hall Of The Mountain Giant*) and a bewildering array of enemies to dodge including Pac-Men and flying toilets. Smith went on to code a sequel, *Jet Set Willy*, that was far too open-ended to complete, and then he disappeared without a trace. Matthew, if you're out there drop us a line – we'd love to hear from you.

And, if you want to sample *Manic Miner* (or you'd just like to know what the hell we're talking about), check out **www.worldofspectrum.org** or **www.xmixdrix.com/manicminer/** for an updated Windows version, complete with spanking new graphics and accurate gameplay.

ROSE-TINTED SPECS

Although introduced to the world in 1981, August 1983 was when IBM announced its next-generation PC, the PC-XT Model 370. With a scorching 8088 CPU, a massive 768K RAM and a gargantuan 10Mb hard drive, you could expect to pick one up for about US$9,000.

Back in the real world, 1983 was the big year of the Sinclair Spectrum. With consoles like the Vectrex, Intellivision and Atari systems dying a horrible death, home computers were becoming the most popular game machines. The Speccy's biggest rival up until then, the Commodore Vic-20 (with a whopping 5K RAM) was slowly on the downturn, but bringing up the rear was the new Commodore 64, which in the UK would prove to be the Spectrum's biggest rival.

New on the shelves was the Electron, Oric-1, Dragon 64 and Atari 800. None challenged the dominance of either the Spectrum or the C64, though still going strong was the Dragon 32, and, for rich kids and schools, the £400 BBC Model B.

Sinclair ZX Spectrum

16K or 48K RAM...
full-size moving-
key keyboard...
colour and sound...
high-resolution
graphics...
From only
£125!
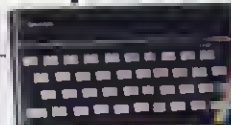
Worth every penny.

ONTHECD

More demos, mods and levels – yet another veritable smorgasbord of tasty things on this month's CDs

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto.

CD RDM NELP PNDNE INTERCHANGE on D152 S711 482 any weekday between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday between 10am and 2pm, **or email pc_zone@interchange.co.uk** Please do NOT phone the *PC ZONE* office. Thanks.

BEFORE YOU DIAL... IF YOU ARE CALLING THE NELPLINE, PLEASE TAKE NDTE DF THE FDLLOWING POINTS ● II possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call. ● If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, sound card, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault. ● Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call, so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

● You need at least a Pentium 266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROMs
● Many of the programs on our cover CDs are designed to run under Windows 95/98 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium II 300 with 64Mb RAM te run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run. ● Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D accelerator only

DISCLAIMER

● This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages ot its production. Nowever, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it. ● Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility tor any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.

DEMOS

ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2

Vivendi · Oisc 1

EXCLUSIVE

"Look, can we talk about this?"

Say hello to Mr Big Gun.

Stop your grinnin' and drop your linen. Thought you were scared last time? Well start getting your plastic pants together now because you've only got a few months before the full game hits the shelves. Just to whet your appetite we bring you this exclusive demo, which gives you the chance to play through the mission Unwanted Guests as a marine on three difficulty modes. Game over man, game over...

CONTROLS

Forward/Back/Strafe Left/Strafe Right	W/S/A/D
Turn Left/Right	Arrow or Mouse
Run	Left Shift
Toggles between walk/run	M
Jump/Climb	Space
Fire Left	Mouse
Alt. Fire	Right Mouse
Activate	E
Look up	/Oown Home/End or Mouse
Mission objectives	Tab
Crouch	Left Ctrl
Crouch toggle	/
Cycle weapons	Q/Z or mouse wheel
Reload	R
Shoulder lamp	X
Flare	F
Marine hacking device	H
Knife	1
Pistol	2
Shotgun	3
Pulse rifle	4
Last weapon	B

PROJECT EDEN

Eidos · Disc 1

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

Not content with unleashing the Lara Croft phenomenon on the world, Core Design has just finished coding its latest release, *Project Eden*. Although it could be loosely classed as a third-person action/adventure, it's no *Tomb Raider* clone. For a start you can't jump and there are no ladders. And, instead of taking charge of the feisty Lara, you have to navigate four characters through a series of puzzles and enemy encounters. In this first-level demo you've got to use all four characters and their unique abilities to get everyone to the UPA access lift. If you want to know more check out our exclusive review starting on page 50.

"I spy anyone?"

Strike a pose lads.
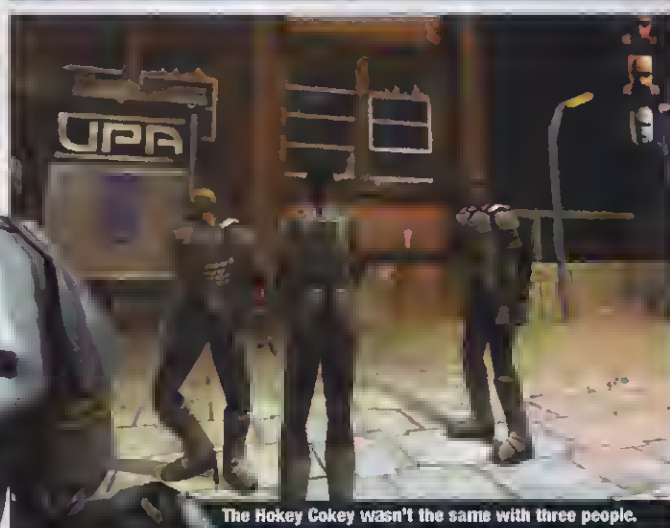
Controls

Mouse	Look/target
Cursor keys	Movement look
1-4	Switch between characters
Duck	Right control
Next weapon	=:
Previous weapon	-:
Order follow/halt	Enter
Torch	T

The Hokey Cokey wasn't the same with three people.

"'eah, the weather's great, just right for a walk

The mysterious garden flasher was about to strike again.

MYSTERY OF THE DRUIDS

CDV · Disc 1

It's not often we get a decent adventure in the office and when we do we like to be first to bring you the demo. Things are about to get interesting for detective Brent Halligan when a routine murder case turns into an investigation into druidic practices and an ancient and dangerous rite. This demo allows you to meet some of the main characters and explore a few of the locations from the main game.

CONTROLS
Mouse

THRONE OF DARKNESS

Vivendi · Disc 2

EXCLUSIVE

This demo will alleviate any fears you might have that *Throne Of Darkness* might just be an average *Diablo*-style hack 'n' slash with big swords and men in dresses. In fact, Click Entertainment is pioneering the way in strategic RPGs, with customisable formations and the ability to create your own battle directives. Gather up your party of seven samurai and explore your clan citadel. Oh, and make sure you kill any bad guys lurking around the place while you're about it.

CONTROLS
Mouse
Consult readme file for information on in-game details.

DIY human sushi.

"Come out, we know you're in there."

Airfix one heads into the sunset.

BUGATRON
Retro64 · Disc 2

A *Galaga*-style shooter, with a surprisingly catchy backing track, even though it sounds like Meat Loaf being played on 'my first Yamaha keyboard'. Shoot everything that whirls, swoops or dive bombs its way towards you. Simple.

CONTROLS
Left/Right/Up/Down	Arrow keys
Fire	Ctrl
Page Up/Page Down	Music volume
Exit	Esc
Pause	P

Weeeeeee!

"Mum, I feel sick now."

WARBIRDS III
Disc 1 · iEntertainment Networks

This third instalment of the hugely popular online World War II flight sim is set to be even more visually stunning than its predecessors, with improved AI, customisable aircraft skins and new scenarios every week. It's time to take to the skies chaps.

CONTROLS
Joystick and keyboard
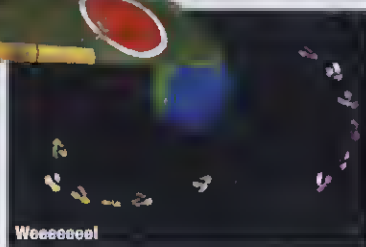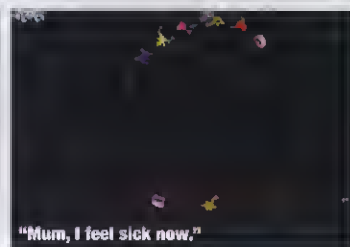
CONQUEST: FRONTIER WARS
Ubi Soft · Disc 2 **EXCLUSIVE**

Our fifth exclusive demo, *Conquest: Frontier Wars*, transports you slap bang into the middle of an intergalactic war, where you have to traverse a dangerous landscape of nebula, anti-matter fields and asteroid belts in the fight to save your species. Engage in a quick battle or play online at www.ubisoft.com.

CONTROLS
Mouse

Now I just need a mini horse's head.

Oh, a wiseguy, huh?

GANGSTERS 2
Disc 1 · Eidos

Mr Pullin didn't rate this isometric *Desperados*-style RTS too highly, but we always like to give you the chance to judge a game for yourself. Your father has been offed by the local crime family and now it's time to avenge daddy and embark on one of the game's early missions, seizing control of the city of Elmsville.

CONTROLS
Mouse

"Is this another one of your bug hunts."

ICEWIND DALE: THE HEART OF WINTER – TRIALS OF THE LUREMASTER
Disc 1 · Interplay

FREE OFFICIAL EXPANSION

You'd think five exclusives would be enough, but we're not finished yet. *Trials Of The Luremaster* is a full expansion to the expansion pack recently released for *Icewind Dale* and it contains 20 new areas to explore, which amounts to around 8-10 hours of gameplay. There are more unique items, new monsters, including jackalweres, ochre jellies and harpies, plus a whole load of bug fixing for *Heart Of Winter*.

There's only one proviso: your party must be of levels 11-18 to take part (higher levels if in Heart Of Fury mode) and you'll need a full copy of *Heart Of Winter*.

CONTROLS
Mouse

Hundreds of new ways to die.

Lots of unique goodies.

"Damn, now where did I put that mega can of Raid?"

SPACE TRIPPER V1.2

Pompom · Disc 2

NEW DEMO

It's back and this time it's easy. Thought our last version was too hard? Well if your fingers weren't worn out the last time with this spacey, arcade-style shooter then prepare for the second coming. But be warned, even on easy mode it's harder than it looks.

CONTROLS

Left/Right/Up/Down	Arrow keys
Flip direction	Z
Fire primary	C
Change weapon	X
Pause	Space

Head straight to the best *CM* website in the world: www.thedugout.net.
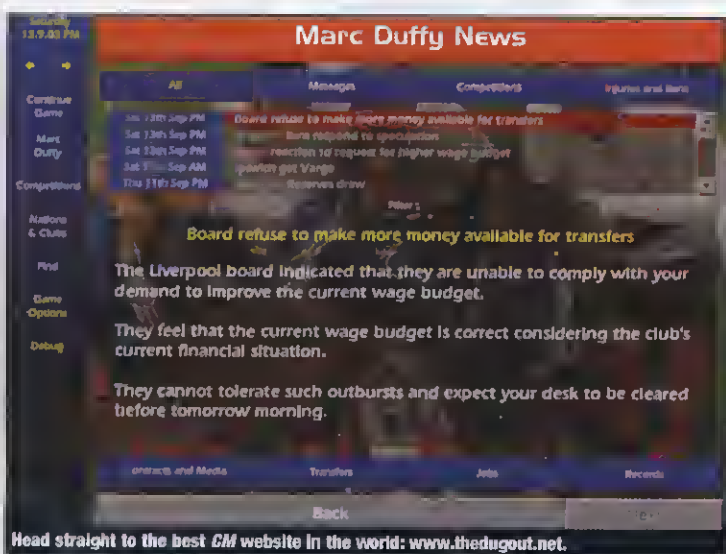
THE DUGOUT ZONE 3

Just because you've got a sheepskin jacket doesn't make you a hotshot manager. What you need is this...

With the start of the football season almost upon us, you just know that the updated *Championship Manager* is going to be following hot on its heels. To make sure you don't miss out on anything, we've got the third of our collaborations with The Dugout (the best *CM* website in the world, if you didn't already know), which includes a special report from the Sports Interactive office, along with a brand new snippet from the forthcoming *CM4*.

The Dugout.net
Your first and only CM stop

You'll also find out how to cut costs on players and wages, how to alter tonts in *CM 01/02* and all the latest files, patches and utilities. Next month we're going to show you how to install a data update and get it working, and in the meantime you can check out our *CM 01/02* Preview on page 38.

JUMPGATE

Mighty games - Disc 1

FREE 5-DAY TRIAL

Your chance to explore the final frontier in this vast online space simulation that features more than 120 sectors, over 20 ships, 50 space stations and a persistent universe. Complete missions, trade, fight and rise through the ranks. This trial version last for five days starting from the day you first install it. However, if you want to play it past the allotted time you're going to have to pay to subscribe.

CONTROLS
Mouse

Flies at 12 o'clock.
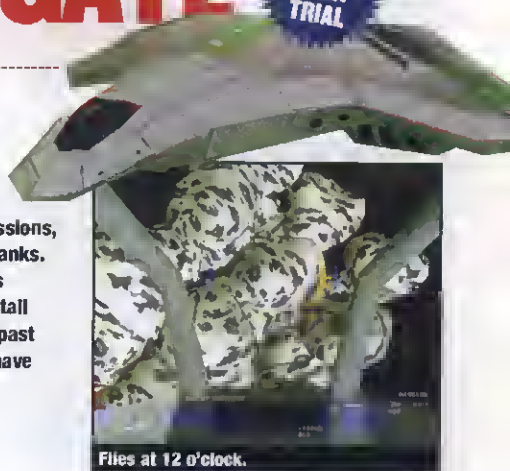
THE CORPORATE MACHINE

Disc 1 · Take 2

Here's your chance to get chewed up and spat out in the works of *The Corporate Machine*. This *Business Tycoon*-style RTS economic game lets you take over companies and build yourself a business empire, without any ot the heart attacks, ulcers and high class prostitutes.

it's guaranteed to keep you out of a suit for life.

CONTROLS
Mouse

Greed is good...

...so is real estate.
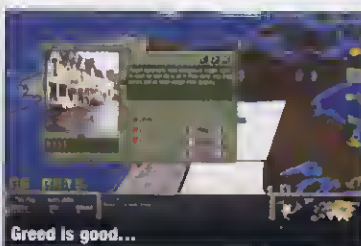
MODS — CD2

Annihilation Beta v1.0	PainKeep Arena
Tactical Ops v2.0	PainKeep Arena Update v2.4
The Opera	

PATCHES — CD1

Delta Force Land Warrior v1.00.31	Legends Of Might & Magic v1.00.31
Half Life 1.1.0.7 Full Upgrade	

PATCHES — CD2

Black & White v1.1100 Final	Tribes 2 23559-23115
Codename Eagle 1.41	Tribes 2 23376-23115
Baldur's Gate II: Shadows Of Amn v23037	Counter-Strike Updater v1.1.0.2
Z: Steel Soldiers Patch v2.0	Half-Life Updater v1.1.0.7
Tribes 2 23115-23669	Giants v1.4

EXTENDED PLAY — CD2

Turn to page 126 where the one we call Mr Lamb brings you the best in goodies for *The Sims*, plus maps and mods for *Cossacks: European Wars* and *Rainbow Six*.

EXTENDED PLAY

Mods and maps for the ultimate love-it-or-hate-it game, *The Sims*, as well as for *Cossacks: European Wars* (proof that Europeans have hated each other for centuries) and *Rogue Spear: Urban Operations*, the first-person shooter for budding psycho-cops everywhere

⊗ **KEEPING IT REAL** Tony Lamb

TRY IT YOURSELF

Installation of all these maps and patches is pretty straightforward, but remember to always check out .zip files for any special instructions.

The Sims items are a mixture of houses, skins and other objects. Skins need to go into the maxis/the sims/gamedata/skins directory and houses, objects and the like need to be put into their corresponding /gamedata/ sub-directory. Remember, when installing houses you must back up the original directory contents as the new house files will overwrite the originals if the plot number is the same.

Cossacks maps need to be installed into the main *Cossacks* directory and can then be selected by choosing single-player, then random map, then designed map and finally the map of your choice. The map editor is a little different – it's already in the game but hidden. Print out the user instructions from our CD document and – hey presto – you've got a user manual.

The *Rogue Spear: Urban Operations* mods should be installed into the Red Storm Entertainment/Rogue Spear/mods directory and can be selected by choosing options from the main menu, then select mods and activate it from the available mods list. It usually works better if you restart the game – the new splash screen will confirm that the mod is running. Then choose single-player, new campaign, and get stuck in.

THE SIMS

The Sims resides under the banner of being a 'management' game as you create a family of little people and guide them down the path of many pitfalls that is everyday life. Careers, relationships, socialising and more will come under your influence as you strive to make your Sims into shiny, happy individuals. This means giving them nice houses, lots of cool household goodies, and a fashionable wardrobe that would make Claudia Schiffer quiver with excitement. A worthwhile ambition if ever there was one…

⊗ Table-Top TV
Author: Burnsider at www.thesimsresource.com/ furniture
Filename: Table_tv.zip
Size: 44Kb
Rating: ⊙⊙⊙

⊕ It's a tabletop telly, and you can watch television programmes on it. Amazing.

How convenient! Now your Sims can have a tabletop TV to watch their favourite programmes on. It's not perfect – it only has one channel and no sound – but as most TV is pants, who's to know?

⊗ Big Speakers
Author: Dsyrus at www.thesimsresource.com /furniture
Filename: BigBass.zip
Size: 76Kb
Rating: ⊙⊙⊙⊙
This set of big floor-standing hi-fi speakers really look the business, and are guaranteed to add an

atmosphere of Techno-savvy to any house.

⊗ Sims Crybaby
Author: EA
Filename: TheSimsCryBaby.exe
Size: 2.3Mb
Rating: ⊙⊙⊙

⊕ Feed, Play or Sing to your Sim baby to keep it happy.

If you're a parent then avoid this like the plague – you know what horrors a screaming baby can mean, but if you aren't then install it to find out how much looking after the little darlings can need. Hopefully you'll suddenly develop a load of sympathy for harassed parents everywhere.

⊗ Ladies Undies
Author: Lisa at www.boutika.org
Filename: boouliund_blooming, gypsy, mintyfresh and perky .zips
Size: 137Kb, 109Kb, 142Kb and 143Kb
Rating: ⊙⊙⊙⊙
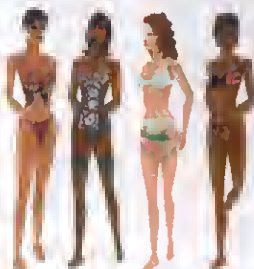
⊕ Well, Sims need to have fun after lights out too…

There can't be a man alive who doesn't like to see his ladylove wrapped up in some sexy attire. The same must be true of red-blooded male Sims and here is a selection of four suitably saucy outfits (but not too revealing, of course). Kitting out your Sim ladies in these little numbers is

even more exciting than sneaking a peek at your Mum's Littlewoods catalogue. Apparently.

⊗ Jukebox
Author: EA
Filename: SimsJukebox.exe
Size: 3.56Mb
Rating: ⊙⊙⊙
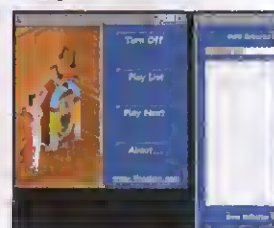
⊕ Use your Sim jukebox to play your fave MP3s.

A hot rockin' 1950s lookalike jukebox for your desktop, which allows you to enjoy your vast collection of choons in the best Sim style. Features are seriously

limited, but it you're a *Sims* fan you'll like it.

⊗ Party Balloons
Author: EA
Filename: PartyBalloons.exe
Size: 154Kb
Rating: ⊙⊙⊙

Sims love a party, and a bunch of balloons festooning the front of the house is always a great way to get everyone in the party spirit. These are guaranteed to cheer up almost any miserable Sim and give him or her that party buzz.

⊗ Skin Pack One
Author: EA
Filename: Skin_Pack_One.exe
Size: 760Kb
Rating: ⊙⊙⊙⊙

More EA skins and this time a definitely way-out set to keep the neighbours' tongues wagging. In this bunch you'll find male and female warriors, boy and girl

BLUEPRINT 1.0.0

⊗ **MAP OF THE MONTH BLUE PRINT 1.0.0**

Author: Bil Simser at www.simtreaks.com/blueprint
Filename: blueprint-1.0.0.zip
Size: 1.4Mb
Rating: ⊙⊙⊙⊙⊙

Blueprint is an excellent utility for *Sims* fans that allows you to create objects for the game from imported 3D meshes. These can either be found on the Web or designed in a decent 3D modelling program, and once installed can be manipulated, textured, coloured and lit in real time – you can see on screen just what your item will look like in the game. You can create objects from scratch using a set of basic 3D building blocks, finish them off and then zip compress them for uploading to any of the many *Sim* fansites. Top stuff.
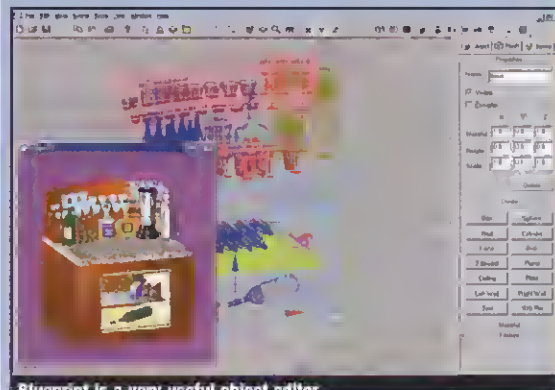
Blueprint is a very useful object editor.

wizards and more to fulfil your fantasy dreams.

⊕ Couple House
Author: Ed Mack
Filename: edmackh1.exe
Size: 154Kb
Rating: ●●●●

A large house with a big swimming pool, cultivated lawns and topiary bushes. A sort of conservatory/gazebo effort straddles part of the pool, which would be pretty neat for Sim parties. Sporty Sims will also like the basketball net, multigym and diving boards. Luckily, there's a barbecue for the pie-eating lardy Sims too.

⊕ Goth House
Author: Ed Mack
Filename: edmackh2.exe
Size: 169Kb
Rating: ●●●
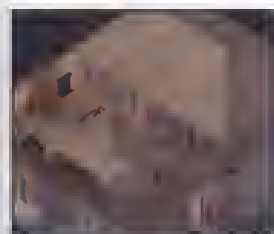
⊕ A charming mix of architectural styles makes Goth House a novel dwelling.

Another big house and a bit of a mix of architectural styles. Georgian windows stand next to a Roman-style colonnade, while the first-floor balcony is home to enough fitness kit to open a shop.

⊕ Willow House
Author: Ed Mack
Filename: edmackh4.exe
Size: 226Kb
Rating: ●●●●
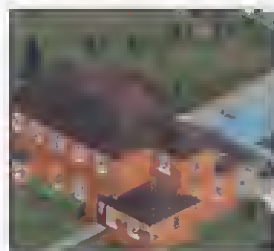
⊕ Willow House is nicely designed with attention to detail.

An impressive property that would have estate agents champing at the bit. Cultivated lawns, rose bushes, trimmed bushes (always a favourite that one), hot tub, swimming pool and an activity playground to keep the kids occupied. A great-looking pad that anyone would be proud of.

⊕ Biker Men
Author: Melv
Filename: melvsk13.exe
Size: 82Kb
Rating: ●●●

Big tough blokes in leathers and 'Don't mess with me' attitudes. Your favourite Sim won't want this lot moving in next door – and not just because they look scary. The constant playing of *Born To Be Wild* would be maddening.

⊕ Bathing Suits
Author: Melv

Filename: melvsk2.exe
Size: 107Kb
Rating: ●●●

His 'n' hers swimming kit for when your Sim neighbours won't see them (they'd be too embarrassed to go out otherwise). Great for catching a bit of sun.

⊕ Posh Ladies Outfits
Author: Melv
Filename: melvsk8.exe
Size: 115Kb
Rating: ●●●

A little too posh perhaps – definitely more old money than nouveau riche – but if your road needs a posh bird then grab hold of this one quick.

⊕ Yellow Bikinis
Author: Melv
Filename: melvsk9.exe
Size: 108Kb
Rating: ●●

The title says it all – babes in yellow bikinis. Quite nice, but probably not at the leading edge of fashion. If you have a fetish for yellow swimwear this is for you.

⊕ Harley Women
Author: Melv
Filename: melvsk11.exe
Size: 76Kb
Rating: ●●●

All the proof you need that not every biker babe weighs 250 pounds, wears cheap leather and suck-starts her Harley for a party trick. Babes and bikes, what more does a man need?

The future looks bright for this little Sim.

Nice pad!

If only you could get a sim to do some housework for you in real life.

NET ADDRESSES

www.pczone.co.uk
If the gaming world was a common household pet, this would be its dangly bits. Everything you could ever want for PC gaming, and then more.

www.thesims.ea.com
The home of *The Sims* as brought to you by EA themselves. Game hints and tips, chat, downloads and lots more.

www.boutika.org
A site dedicated to clothing the fairer sex of Simsville. Not very big, but some well-designed skins, accessories and decor items.

www.simfreaks.com
A great place to find lots of cool skins, houses, objects, sets and everything else to keep your Sims grinning.

http://thesims.strategy-gaming.com/links
Probably the biggest set of *Sims* links out there with some 100+ connections to other websites available. An essential bookmark.

www.thesims.co.uk
A great site to find the latest news and cool downloads. Look out for cheats, installation tips and a big bulletin board.

www.thesimsresource.com
Another big site and stuffed full with downloads and more. You'll find tutorials, news, cheats and many links.

www.mallofthesims.com
It's a shopping mall with no less than 54 stores all dedicated to making your Sims happy. One hitch – it's a pay site – but worth a trip if you're feeling flush.

www.livinaroundthesims.com
Objects, skins, walls, floors, themes, news and more.

www.sevendeadlysims.com
Lots of cool downloads here from floors to walls and skins to sets.

➔

RAINBOW SIX: ROGUE SPEAR – URBAN OPERATIONS

Once dominated by space marines, absolute reality is now the Holy Grail for first-person shooters, and you need look no further than the SAS antics of *Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear – Urban Operations* for your evidence. Comparisons with *Half-Life* mod *Counter-Strike* are inevitable, but for real-life locations, weaponry and atmosphere, *Rogue Spear* is the business. With these mods, it gets even better too...

Ulster Ops
Author: Orion IV
Filename: ulster_ops.exe
Size: 15.7Mb
Rating: OOOO
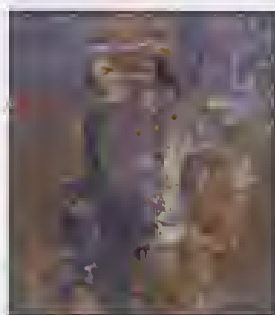
⬆ You can't go to work like that mate, your mascara's running.

Welcome to bandit country. This mod sees the SAS in a role that will make the greatest possible use of their skills at subterfuge – taking on the IRA on their home territory in Northern Ireland. This is one theatre of war where just being quick with a gun isn't enough and you'll need your wits to be at their sharpest if you want to survive. *Ulster Ops* has no less than five missions including sniper hunting in Crossmaglen, raiding an IRA stronghold to capture a high-profile target, stopping an arms deal, hostage rescue in Belfast and reliving true 1987 events by fighting off an all-out IRA attack on an RUC station.

The atmosphere in this mod is superb – both frightening and exciting – and makes full use of *Rogue Spear*'s many features.

Counter-Terrorist OPs
Author: Orion IV
Filename: ct_ops.exe
Size: 10.9Mb
Rating: OOOO
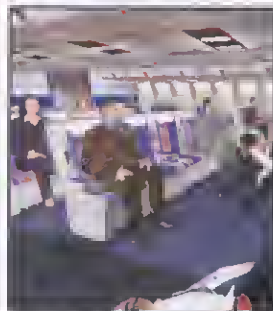
⬆ Kill all the terrorists and rescue the hostages for a big kiss from the girl on the left. No, not really.

The SAS are probably even more famous for their hostage-rescue and anti-terrorist operations than they are for their more conventional fighting roles. These are times when getting in fast and hitting the enemy very, very hard is the only way to win and it's lucky for us that this is an SAS speciality. *CT-Ops* is a group of three historical missions starting with the Regiment's involvement in the liberation of Lufthansa flight 181 at Mogadishu where they went in alongside the German GSG9. The second mission is the one that grabbed the attention of the world's media – the storming of the Iranian Embassy at Princess Gate in London – and the last is set during the Peterhead prison riots when the SAS went in to knock some heads together.

This is a difficult mod to complete. The locations are detailed, well chosen and each is different. The atmosphere is tense, and like any *Rogue Spear* mod, the trick is to move carefully, move quietly, and make every shot a kill.

NET ADDRESSES

www.redstorm.com
Check here for the latest official news from the developers of *Rogue Spear*.

www.planetrainbowsix.com
The inevitable 'planet' website and the top place for links, news, hints and tips. An essential bookmark.

www.planetrainbowsix.com/dtd/
The home of Cocobolo ops and their great SWAT and other mods. A must-see.

www.planetrainbowsix.com/teamhak/
Another site devoted to *Rogue Spear – Urban Ops* mods.

www.greywolf.tripod.com
Check this out for an *Urban Ops* mod based on a certain classic shooter called *D**M*

www.planetrainbowsix.com/lloydsmods/index
Weapons, skins and more for both the *Rogue Spear* original and the *Urban Ops* add-on.

COSSACKS

Majestic sweeping plains, sun-dappled forests and tens of thousands of soldiers happily disembowelling each other for the sake of King and country. This is ace strategy game *Cossacks*, in which you oversee the battles between no less than 16 European countries, each wanting to dominate the others mercilessly – and probably introduce a single currency too. Nowadays we're all one happy family, but here's your chance to enjoy the days when killing foreigners was a national sport.

Crusader (Map)
Author: Peter Hodd
Filename: crusader.zip
Size: 849Kb
Rating: OOOO
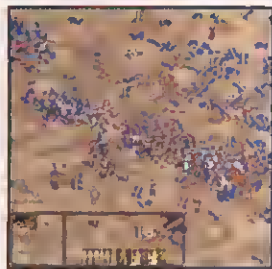
⬆ Blue decides that the 'Double or Quits' challenge wasn't such a good idea...

Command Austrian troops in an east/west battle against Turkish and Algerian forces. To your north is the sea and desert stretches away to the south. There is no cover between the two armies, and although the southern end of the map does have some higher ground, this is unfortunately impassable. The enemy has a large number of cavalry and pikemen, so strike at range with your artillery if you can, and protect your vulnerable infantry.

Waterloo V1.0 (Map)
Author: Peter Hodd
Filename: waterloo.zip
Size: 1Mb
Rating: OOOO
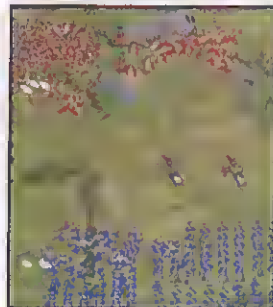
⬆ Infantry attacking cannons head on is never a particularly successful tactic.

Waterloo was one of the most famous battles ever fought and a landmark in European history. We won it, and then Abba went on to sing about it – so it must have been important. The battle doesn't fit exactly with the troop options available in *Cossacks*, but the author has obviously spent a lot of time in getting the on-screen action to be as close as he can to true events, and pretty successfully too.

Cossacks map editor
Author: Stefan Hertrich and Sergiy Grygorovich
Filename: map editor – Cossacks European Wars.doc
Size: 243Kb
Rating: OOOO
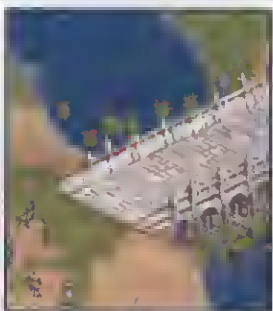
⬆ Unlock the map editor and make your own scenarios.

You might not have known it, but when you bought the game you got a map editor too – and here's the gen on how to use it. The editor isn't perfect – there are a couple of small bugs – but do remember that this wasn't intended for formal public release. It's a bonus that the *Cossacks* team put in there to make their lives easier, and now you can make it work for you.

BORODINO (MAP)

MAP OF THE MONTH BORODINO (MAP)

Author: Peter Hodd
Filename: borodino.zip
Size: 1.2Mb
Rating: OOOOO

Borodino is a recreation of an historical battle between French and Russian forces. You fight from west to east and have to deal with a steep escarpment (from which your enemy has commanding gun positions), forest, marshland and a river that splits your forces in two but only has one crossing. Not easy.
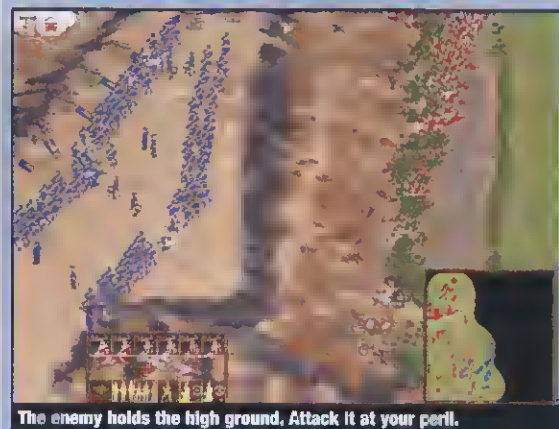
The enemy holds the high ground. Attack it at your peril.

NET ADDRESSES

www.cdv.de
Homepage for developer CDV. Find out about them and their latest games here.

www.cossacks.com
Game info, up-to-date news, links, FAQs, screenshots and patch downloads.

www.cossacks.4players.de/englishversion/body_index/
A top resource for maps, battle scenarios and other battle and sound mods. Check out the downloads section.

COMMENT

As a famous group of Swedes never said: money, money, money. It's not funny, If It leads to a dumbed-down world

● **COUNTING HIS PENNIES** DAVE WOODS

O ver the past couple of months I've heard a lot of talk from developers about the need to broaden the scope of games so that they're accessible to a wider cross section of society. The only trouble is that this is often followed up by a statement that seems to suggest that this can only be achieved through dumbing down.

Did you read Prezzer's comment in our mag last month, regarding *Train Simulator* and other such fascinating niches? His point was that people might not admit to owning the game, but he'd stake money on it entering the charts at number one and staying there for a fair few weeks. (And he would have been right if it hadn't been for that pesky *Max Payne*...) You can't accuse *Train Simulator* of being dumbed down, but there's enough train fanatics out there to make it a financial success, without turning it into some sort of

cutesy family Sim-like steam 'em up.

And that's the bottom line. Talk by developers about broadening the scope of their audience isn't about some sort of vision to use the PC to bring people together in a loved-up Utopia. It's about ensuring that games carry on making money. And I know that this is a given if the industry is going to survive, especially in this current economic climate, but where will it all end?

Unlike the retro stuff we've been looking at over the past couple of issues, good games these days cost millions to produce. Just last week I heard a rumour that one of the biggest FPSs of the year is also going to be one of the biggest financial turkeys ever because it's already gone way over budget and can't possibly sell enough copies on release to break even.

Obviously a balance has to be found, but I'm hoping it's the right one. Dumbing down

isn't the answer and it will be a dark day when big corporations only back guaranteed winners instead of rewarding creativity from the true auteurs of this industry. Like or loathe *Black & White* and *Deus Ex* (and both can only dream about selling as many copies as *The Sims*), when some weird two-headed futuristic editor of *PC ZONE* compiles a timeline chronicling the last century of PC gaming, these are both going to figure pretty heavily.

Only a couple of weeks ago I was talking to a high-profile developer (who shall remain anonymous), railing about the fact that money men who know nothing about games are being recruited by the big

> ⦿ Would *Max Payne* be possible in a budget-conscious society?

"Last week I heard a rumour that one of the biggest FPSs of the year is also going to be one of the biggest financial turkeys ever"

boys to head up their businesses, driving creativity away by treating games like any other non-creative commodity. Like lumps of coal. You know the sort – faceless suits that drift from company to company, spending about six months at each, sending them spiralling into bankruptcy before graciously accepting a six-figure golden handshake and starting over again somewhere else. Said developer nearly gave up games because he was becoming increasingly alienated from his work, and disillusioned with his craft.

In a recent interview the head honcho of Dynamix revealed that they had to balance the cost of developing quality and originality (*Tribes 2*) by creating low-cost, high-return games that aren't necessarily the most creative titles in the world. This is one way around the problem, but obviously not a solution everyone can adopt. To use a cinematic analogy, smaller developers without the

financial clout and creative freedom of Molyneux or Spector (think Scorsese and Kubrick) need to dig deep to find originality, and games that are fun and stretch the audience, without using the sort of technology that sends the budgets over the hills. Go and watch the best low-budget independent films and you'll realise that money isn't everything. Vision is more then half the battle.

In my opinion, if we can hold tight, the future is going to create a much broader base for gaming anyway. Remember that you're the first generation and as you grow older you're not going to turn your backs on the games you love and take to playing two-inch thick records at 78rpm. New gamers are being born all the time, and this adds to the throng of people clamouring for cutting-edge entertainment (like *Max Payne*, which we've finally got to review on page 54). And although this throng consists of individuals with disparate views, tastes, likes and dislikes, it should be big enough to provide success for niches and minority tastes on the PC. After all, if independent film-makers can still produce quality films in the face of Hollywood dominance and commercialism, surely the same can happen in the world of the PC. PCZ

Jenny: "In food, what 'D' is a cream of cauliflower soup?"

£2500
1,750
1,000
500
250
100
50
£100 BANK

JENNY

1:46

OK, I enjoyed it, but I don't want this to be the staple diet of future gamers. Goodbye.

ARCANUM

Of Steamworks & Magick Obscura

Bullets & Brimstone

Witness the metallurgical might of the repeating rifle of unleash the dark arts of a Hellgate, as a mechanical future challenges a magical past.
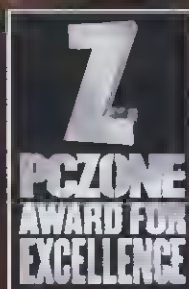
An Industrial Revolution in a World of Magic

80 spells in 16 Colleges are at your disposal while the mechanically inclined can construct wonders of the age with 56 technological degrees from 8 disciplines.

Dozen of quests and a limitless character design let you decide the destiny of your character.

Z PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

"Great plot, character development is second to none... VERY ADDICTIVE."

SIERRA
www.sierra-online.co.uk